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ABSTRACT

These four issues of the English Leadership Quarterly represent those published during 1992. Articles in number 1 deal with testing assessing, and measuring student performance, and include: "Real Evaluation: Portfolios as an Effective Alternative to Standardized Testing" (Kate Kiefer); "No More Objective Tests, Ever" (Carol Jago); "Process-Based Literature/Writing Examinations" (Barbara King-Shaver); "Portfolio Assessment: Students as Producers" (Henry Kiernan); "Eliminating the Negative Effects of Ability Grouping on Low-Achieving Students" (Wendell Schwartz and Dan Galloway); and "The Rhetorical Stance of Assessment" (Robert Perrin). Articles in number 2 deal with reading and writing connections and include: "Building a Community of Readers and Writers: Portrait of a Teacher at Work" (Driek Zirinsky); "WC: At the Heart of the Junior High" (Mary Licklider); "Three Roads Converge in a Microchip: Reading, Writing, and Computer-Assisted Instruction" (J. Colavito); "From Chaos to Competency: Weak Readers Learn To Write" (Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber); "Using Reading- and Writing-to-Learn To Promote Revision" (John Wilson Swope); and "A Response Journal Makes the Reading/Writing Connection" (Rebecca Laubach). Articles in number 3 deal with literacy and include: "The Reality of Reform" (Elliot W. Eisner); "To Be Literate" (William F. Williams); "Literacy: The Crisis Mentality" (William T. Fagan); "Collaboration for Critical Literacy" (Pamela Farrell); and "'Classics Illustrated' Comics: Promoting Personal Response" (George I. Martin). Articles in number 4 deal with alternatives and include: "Learning and Teaching in Community" (Kathleen Blake Yancey and Boyd Davis); "Writing: Therapy without the Therapist" (Mike Tebo); "Metaphors from the Arts: Rethinking Contexts for Writing" (Rob Perrin); "New Beginnings for Change" (Susan Benjamin and Jane Gard); and "When the Students Create the Questions" (Joy Marks Gray). (SR)

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Leadership for Excellence

ENGLISH LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY

Conference on English Leadership

Volume 14, Number 1
February 1992
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In This Issue

REAL EVALUATION: TESTING, ASSESSING, AND MEASURING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

by James Strickland, editor

The "report card"—a twentieth-century instrument of torture. Issued periodically, normally four times a year, report cards document student performance with numerical or alphabetical grades. Report cards, and the grades usually arrived at by averaging a series of tests implemented throughout the marking period, are taken seriously by school boards, supervisors, parents, institutions of higher learning, institutions of future employment, and the students themselves.

Report cards give students a mirror by which to see themselves. During her senior year, our daughter Laura, although proud of the grades she received, covered herself for each upcoming marking period by saying, as she handed us the card, "Now, don't expect this next time. . . ." Her best friend, Leah—not as proud of her grades—retrieved the card from the mailbox each time, hiding the card from her mother for weeks, knowing the marks would spell dishonor and imprisonment ("grounding"). They're both in college now but still terrified about grades, frightened that their first-semester grades will brand them with a numerical statement of their potential and will follow them through the next seven semesters in the form of something called a cumulative GPA.

Report cards present an image of the student to parents as well. Carrie, Laura's cousin, always got 90s, but this marking period she got an 87 average. Her parents are upset about the report card, though I can't help but wonder about their interpretation of the information on the card. Does the report card give them information like a stock market report—Carrie's stock previously sold at 93 but today it's at 87, a drop of 6 points? Does the report card give them information like a pie chart—she knows 87 percent of what she should, but she somehow didn't learn 13 percent of it? And if so, is there something very important to know included in the missing 13 percent? It turns out the report card told them that she was spending too much time on what she loved most, her dance lessons, and not enough time on her homework. It's hard to predict what an 87 on a report card will mean. Carrie's younger sister, Kelly, probably breathed a sigh of relief, having been compared all her life, unfavorably of course, to her older sister. Kelly, who had to wait until fourth grade before seeing an A on a report card, would probably be happy with her sister's 87.

Report cards also present us with an image of who we are as teachers, filling them out each marking period. If we regard our students as little experiments that we keep track of and calculate the success rate for in percentages, then I guess the traditional assessment and evaluation marking system makes sense, in the same way that giving a report card to a horse, a baseball player, a skier makes sense—listing averages and performance scores. Yet, if we regard our students as pupils who study under our guiding eyes, growing in maturity and ability along side of us, it no longer makes sense to evaluate them with objective tests and measure-

(continued on page 2)

Inside . . . **page number**

Real Evaluation: Portfolios as an Effective Alternative to Standardized Testing 2
by Kate Kiefer
No More Objective Tests, Ever 4
by Carol Jago
Process-Based Literature/Writing Examinations . . . 6
by Barbara King-Shaver
Portfolio Assessment: Students as Producers 7
by Henry Kiernan
Eliminating the Negative Effects of Ability Grouping on Low-Achieving Students 9
by Wendell Schwartz and Dan Galloway
The Rhetorical Stance of Assessment 10
by Robert Perrin
Software Review: "The Writing Cycle," by Roxbury Publishing Company. 12
by Wendy Paterson
Book Review: Rei Noguchi, *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing* 12
by William F. Williams
Announcements 13
1992 Conference Proposal Form 15
Calls for Manuscripts 16

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ments. Students deserve praise and constructive criticism, especially in terms of language abilities. I'm glad we're finally changing the way we see ourselves and what we do. We're finally talking about ourselves as artists rather than as mathematicians or scientists. And the place where I see this is in the area of evaluation and assessment.

Kate Kiefer, a professor at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, offers the portfolio as a real alternative to the traditional forms of testing. Kate is the former editor and cofounder of *Computers and Composition* and has published numerous articles detailing her pioneering work with Bell Lab's "Writer's Workbench" style analysis software.

If President Bush were serious about being an education president, he would have someone visit Carol Jago's classroom in Santa Monica High School. He wouldn't find an objective test being given in her classroom, ever. And what he would find would give you hope in American education. You'll see what I mean when you read Karen Montoya's exam answer, included in Carol's article.

Barbara King-Shaver has transformed evaluation in the English department at South Brunswick High School in Monmouth Junction, New Jersey, shunning the objective test in favor of a process-based literature/writing examination. She includes examples of these alternative exams for courses in world literature and American literature.

Henry Kiernan, the Humanities Supervisor at Southern Regional High School in Manahawkin, New Jersey, advocates the portfolio as an assessment tool, arguing that it makes the students take control of their evaluation. What is remarkable about Kiernan's approach is that his department adopted portfolio assessment in response to their formulation of a series of philosophical statements, a move that takes the portfolio out of the "latest-fad" category and into an approach grounded in educational philosophy.

Wendell Schwartz, a name familiar to readers through his years of leadership as chair of the *Quarterly*'s sponsoring conference, the Conference on English Leadership and its earlier incarnation as CSSEDC, and Dan Galloway, a colleague at Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Prairie View, Illinois, share their approach to the problem of tracking. In their article, Schwartz and Galloway describe a program they developed to eliminate the harmful effects that grouping has on lower-ability students.

Robert Perrin, the acting chair of the English department of Indiana State University in Terre Haute, a department of 56 (audible gasp!), believes that when we act to mark and grade student writing, we are, in fact, operating within a writing situation ourselves, one that has a rhetorical context and purpose. Perrin analyzes the rhetorical stance of assessment, after Wayne Booth's rhetorical triad of role, reader, and purpose.

Bill Williams, an associate professor at Slippery Rock University, turns in a critical review of Rei Noguchi's new publication, *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing*, and Wendy Paterson, our software reviewer whose computer at Buffalo State College is user-friendly with pictures of Kevin Costner taped to it, reviews "The Writing Cycle," published by Roxbury.

Along with the teachers whose articles are featured in this issue, I believe we need to evaluate student performance, but there must be a more honest and humane way to do the assessment. What we are demanding is accountability. Numbers and percentages are abstract and stand for little; real assessment and evaluation demand knowing our students, being aware of their strengths and needs, and knowing how best to support their learning.

REAL EVALUATION: PORTFOLIOS AS AN EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO STANDARDIZED TESTING

by Kate Kiefer
Colorado State University, Fort Collins

Particularly as school budgets continue to shrink and as achievement scores continue to decline, teachers and administrators will face increasing pressures to justify educational programs. Because standardized testing has been perceived by the public as an effective measure of language skills, English teachers can expect to bear the brunt of criticism about declining test scores. It is time, however, for English departments at all levels to shift the focus of the argument. It is time for English teachers to implement effective alternative measures that more accurately gauge students' language skills.

Most teachers of writing place little value on standardized tests because we recognize, as Rex Brown does, that tests of grammar and usage "reveal little about specific strengths and weaknesses in students' *writing*" ("Choosing or Creating an Appropriate Writing Test." *Basic Writing: Essays for Teachers, Researchers, Administrators.* Ed. Lawrence N. Kasden and Daniel R. Hoeber. Urbana: NCTE, 1980, p. 106.) Rather, most teachers of writing are more likely to look at writing itself as the key to students' growth and improvement as writers. The difficulty is that looking at writing can be time-consuming, yet students develop writing skills only when they receive timely and meaningful feedback on their writing. Because portfolio assessment offers teachers opportunities to comment on work in progress as well as on final products, this "real" evaluation approach is one way more and more teachers are helping students build on strengths and overcome weaknesses in their writing collected over a quarter, a semester, a year, or longer. "Keeping samples of student language and maintaining records over time will provide a much better indication of growth than will end-of-level or end-of-book test scores or standardized test scores," as Dorothy Watson contends (*Ideas and Insights: Language Arts in the Elementary School*). Urbana: NCTE, 1987, p. 209).

With clear and immediate benefits for students, teachers, and administrators, portfolio assessment is being implemented in more and more schools that are seeking to evaluate writing and critical thinking, not just editing and proofreading skills.

Building the Portfolio: One Workable Approach

As I explain to my students, portfolios are simply collections of work. Artists keep portfolios, as do models, architects, writers, and others who want to show the range or directions of their work.

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Like other portfolios, the writing portfolio for students must be developed over time. At the beginning of the semester, the portfolio can be a repository for everything students are working on in a writing or literature class. Prewriting scribbles and first drafts go into the portfolio. Intermediate drafts and peer review worksheets go into the portfolio. Eventually, polished drafts go in, and finally, students will have papers representing all stages of the writing process—from brainstorming notes to final drafts. At this point, students might wish to cull materials from the portfolio, but I encourage them to keep everything in the portfolio until just before the due date. Then I suggest that they move unfinished or less successful pieces to another file folder or notebook and keep the portfolio for those finished pieces that best demonstrate their skills as writers.

In my classes, I collect portfolios at midterm and again at the end of the semester. However, I insist that students must have working drafts of papers at peer review sessions scheduled about once a week through the term. Students may bring the same paper (but a revised draft) to successive workshop sessions, but they must have a draft for peer review at each workshop. Thus, my schedule helps students avoid procrastinating so much that they cannot include significant work in the portfolio.

Some teachers who use portfolios require that students demonstrate control of certain skills. Margie Krest, for instance, checks modes off a sheet attached to the inside cover of the portfolio ("Adapting the Portfolio to Meet Student Needs," *English Journal*, 79. 2, 1990). With this method, she can be sure that students practice certain skills as they develop a portfolio. For my portfolios, I simply tell students how many finished pages they are responsible for submitting. I also set a maximum number of papers so that students don't submit 12 one-page papers, for instance. But I give students as much flexibility as possible, and they appreciate this flexibility in creating their portfolios.

Students Benefit from Portfolio Assessment

Perhaps most important to students, portfolios allow them time for germination and significant revision of their ideas on paper. In effect, students can get an idea, prewrite on it, put the topic aside for a few days or several weeks, come back to the topic and draft, get feedback from the teacher and peers, and revise—all before a final paper is submitted for grading. Or students might decide to draft papers early in the semester and revise repeatedly in response to teacher and peer feedback—only to decide not to include those papers in final portfolios. Portfolio assessment thus allows students to feel that they have time to think and rethink ideas before they must commit them to paper in a final form. Moreover, portfolio assessment fosters several other important skills:

1. Students gain a better sense of the recursiveness of writing because they have more time to explore ideas and to move deliberately through writing processes as a paper develops.
2. Students generally develop a stronger sense of the value of revision, a writing process that is particularly difficult for younger or less mature writers, because they can return to the same paper several times.
3. Students might spend several weeks (as many as 14 in our semester system) working on a paper because they are often more willing to take risks in revising and to try new techniques or strategies that they simply will not try when a paper is due a few days after it is first assigned.
4. Students improve their skills as readers and critics of peers' papers because they have multiple opportunities to read and respond to drafts-in-progress. And as they become more confident as readers, students also develop a much better sense of how to read their own papers more critically.
5. Students improve their abilities to critique and analyze their own papers for strengths and weaknesses because they must eventually cull the portfolio to choose only the best or most engaging or most fruitful papers to include in the final portfolio. From this improved ability for self-critique, they develop greater confidence and motivation to improve as writers.

These benefits are clear and persuasive—especially to students. And with these benefits laid out, students are highly motivated to do their best work in the portfolios, thus assuring that teachers have the most accurate reflections of students' abilities to evaluate.

Teachers Benefit from Portfolio Assessment

Teachers also react positively to portfolios because they offer the opportunity to assess a broad range of writing skills. The caring teacher interested in responding meaningfully to students as writers can use portfolio assessment both for ongoing formative evaluation and for summative assessment of long-term educational outcomes.

Formative Evaluation

An important revelation for me was that students were suddenly taking my comments seriously. I had always spent a great deal of time commenting extensively on papers they submitted. But I often saw them flip to the last page of a paper, check the grade, and toss the paper into a wastebasket or into their backpacks. I usually felt as if the time I invested in trying to teach writing through my comments had been wasted. After I began using portfolio grading, I quickly discovered that students no longer waited until a paper was finished to elicit my comments. I offer them the opportunity to submit any draft of a paper for my comments. Most do. Students eagerly question me about my reactions to their drafts. They debate the merits of my reading of their papers. Many of them take my comments into a peer review workshop where they use the comments to elicit advice from their peers to help them better execute their intentions for their papers.

And not only comments on intervention drafts but even those on final portfolios now get serious readings. My experience last semester is typical: on the day that I handed back midterm portfolios, students read my comments intently for half an hour or more.

The time I spend reading and reacting to papers now feels like time invested wisely. My comments now teach students about their strengths and weaknesses as writers. And with the range of materials in the portfolio, I can easily adjust my teaching to accommodate their knowledge and skills: I can address the needs of each student based on strengths and weaknesses shown in the portfolio.

Moreover, I feel as if I have a reasonable sampling of work to base my grading on. No longer am I pointing out strengths and weaknesses in a single paper. I do comment on each paper in the portfolio, but that is not the main focus of my summary comment for the portfolio. Instead, I look for consistency, for trends, for repeated strengths and weaknesses that define the student's development as a writer. With a portfolio of two to four papers (12 to 20 pages), I feel as if I have real substance to work with, real evidence of the writer's abilities.

Finally, for me, portfolio assessment makes a vital connection between my assumptions as a teacher of writing and my evaluation techniques. In the past I often felt that I was forced to evaluate papers that could not reflect the sometimes slow and always

intricate development of writing processes which were the focus of my teaching. With portfolios, I now feel that I am both teaching and evaluating writing processes.

Summative Evaluation

As teachers of writing, we know that students' writing and critical thinking skills develop slowly over time. Portfolios allow meaningful comparisons of the processes that students must master to become confident readers and writers in the work place. Among those skills that portfolios allow teachers to measure over time:

1. Critical thinking skills. Teachers can assess not only written products but students' critical-thinking skills because the students choose which pieces to include in the portfolio, particularly if their teachers ask them to provide a rationale for the pieces included. Because our society emphasizes critical thinking, assessment techniques that can provide evaluations of writing *and* thinking will be more highly valued.
2. Writing processes. I can assess not only a final product but students' awareness of writing processes as they develop over a semester because they submit a full record of the progress of each piece of writing in the portfolios I collect.
3. Reading and critiquing. Portfolios foster collaborative learning activities because they require students to revise extensively. Students quickly discover that the teacher is just one reader among many in the writing class, and they begin taking advantage of their peers as readers and critics. Having built trust in the community of writers in the classroom, students are more willing to work with peers on all aspects of writing—from generating ideas to collecting information to editing final drafts. Teachers can track this growth in reading and writing skills by having their students include not only drafts but also peer review worksheets or comments in the portfolio.

Summative evaluation can occur at intervals that meet students' needs or larger assessment needs. If a school needs a yearly summation of students' progress in these skills, portfolios can easily provide data for class- or school-wide assessment. Summative evaluation on larger scales is similarly possible—for an entire district or state or for progress over several years.

In short, standardized tests give only a snapshot of certain limited skills; portfolios provide a rich canvas of a full range of reading, writing, and thinking skills that teachers can evaluate to assess individual students' growth as well as program effectiveness.

Administrators Benefit from Portfolio Assessment

I began this paper by asserting that teachers of writing care about helping students develop as writers and that standardized tests do little to promote that goal. Yet our educational system is under pressure to show its results in easily measurable ways. Fortunately, portfolios can also serve the larger community of parents, administrators, and employers by showing how students make meaning through their writing and also how students compare in their writing skills.

Because of their flexibility, and because of their "sensitivity to language and making meaning in a social context that the portfolios most richly record" (Roberta Herter, "Writing Portfolios: Alternatives to Testing," *English Journal*, 80. 1, 1991, p. 90), portfolios can serve both short- and long-term assessment goals. As Jay Simmons demonstrates in his study comparing holistic judgments of portfolios and of timed writing samples, portfolios can be used economically to rank writers (the results more often connected with standardized test results) but, more importantly, to better estimate "student ability, be more fair to our weakest writers, and profile both the habits and judgments of student writers by ability group. And, we can do all this in about the same time, and for about the same cost as our current, less informative methods" ("Portfolios as Large-scale Assessment," *Language Arts*, 67. 3, 1990, p. 265).

In short, portfolios can serve for summative assessment in individual schools, in school districts, in states, and in national assessment projects. Any assessment measure that can be molded to match local curricular needs, teaching styles, and student concerns *and* to answer large-scale assessment questions deserves concerted and vocal support from teachers and administrators interested in "real evaluation."

NO MORE OBJECTIVE TESTS, EVER

by Carol Jago
Santa Monica High School, California

Every time a teacher of literature gives an objective test she undermines her students' confidence in themselves as readers. The very act of posing questions to which answers will be determined as right or wrong sends a message to students that their teacher is the source of all real information and power in a classroom. Unless this attitude is what we believe or want to encourage, we must abandon all such tests forever.

Objective Tests Don't Tell Us Anything We Don't Already Know

If my goal in the classroom is to create a community of readers and writers, peopled with students who can and do read and write, it does not make sense for me to ask these students to match "Penelope" with the description "Odysseus's long-suffering and faithful wife." If any of my students do not know this important identification fact after the class has spent three weeks reading the epic, I am certain that I would already be aware of this after observing the student's class participation (or lack thereof). There is really no need to punish the student in the name of assessment when I already have enough information to assign a grade. Futhermore, I do not need to waste a period of class time to determine that the participating students know the material when I already have that information as well. If you doubt that this is true, the next time you give an objective test, jot down how you think each student will do before you correct the papers. I'll wager there are few surprises.

Objective Tests Foster Competition Instead of Collaboration

Objective tests also foster a competitive spirit in the classroom. Test scores encourage students to label one another "smarter-than-me" or "dumber-than-me," an attitude that results in severely limited classroom discussion. Look at it from the student's point of view: it's hard to feel good about contributing to a discussion on Monday when you've just been handed a glowing red D from Friday's pop quiz.

Teachers contradict themselves when, in one breath, they tell students to say what they think about a piece of literature, and in the next, ask them on an objective test to fill in the name of Beowulf's father or some other such point that all but the most astute readers will have missed. Does making such distinctions between readers help them to read more thoughtfully? I think not.

Objective Tests Take Away Ownership

When students write, they need to feel confident enough to use their own ideas in their essays. When students read, they need to

have the confidence to share their interpretation in the classroom. Ideally, every voice will have weight and substance, and every voice will add to the group's collective understanding of the text. For this to happen, however, students must respect one another's varied interpretations and regard one another as able thinkers. There are no "dummies" in this type of classroom. And although their ideas may have developed as a result of discussing a novel with their classmates, the students still have ownership of them. Students feel no ownership of information presented on a multiple choice test. Even when they are asked to construct questions and submit them as items for a test, they simply imitate the superficial questions they have seen before.

Objective Tests Are Not College Prep

Some argue that objective testing prepares students for college, yet the students who go on to do gloriously well at the university are those who read widely with understanding, those who speak articulately about what they have read, and those who write with confidence. I fail to see how objective tests help develop such qualities in learners.

Questions are the key to understanding literature. Students must have space to ask real questions, ones they genuinely want answers to. Demanding their quick response to our objective test questions discourages such thinking about the literature. Besides, the issues we choose to emphasize, for example the differences between Brutus's and Cassius's rhetorical styles, may not be what fascinated a student when reading *Julius Caesar*. That reader may have been more interested in the political power struggle between Antony and Octavius; therefore, this is what that reader remembered. A teacher constructing an objective test would be, in effect, punishing the Antony/Octavius reading while rewarding those that matched the teacher's Brutus/Cassius reading. It is obvious how unfair this approach is, regardless of whether you can justify it by saying, "But I talked about the funeral orations in class." Our job as teachers is to model reading and thinking about a text, not to dictate meaning. When we deny students their right to a valid interpretation, we actually discourage both reading and thinking.

A Golden Rule

Objective tests do a tremendous disservice to anyone who is trying to bring the real world of reading and writing into our schools. Take a moment to think about the last book you read. What stayed with you? It is probably neither the characters' names nor a short identification tag about them. What stayed with you is probably a feeling about the book, a message you thought the author conveyed, a world you walked in for the period of time you read. How would you feel about taking a test on this story and answering true and false questions about what happened or what the book meant? I know such a test would severely undermine the pleasure I took from the last book I read, Naguib Mafouz's *Palace Walk*. Except in the give and take of discussion, I would not want to be required to match my reading with anyone else's. For someone—anyone, even the author—to be set up as the arbiter of what a book says to the reader contradicts what we know about reading. Why would I practice in my classroom that which I do not believe is true in the larger world?

An Alternative to Objective Tests

This year I needed to assess a class of tenth graders on their reading of *The Odyssey*. Instead of using an objective test, I asked my students to write about a major character in the epic who was most like them and to explain the similarity using examples from their own and the character's lives. The students' papers support my premise that there are better ways to evaluate than objective tests. I would like to share what one of my students, Karen Montoya, wrote in class that Friday. Not a word has been changed.

"Zeus-born, son of Laertes, Odysseus of many devices resembles me the most out of all the characters in *The Odyssey*. I can relate to him because in the whole epic his purpose is to see his family and someday reach sunny Ithaca. Like Odysseus, I am often sad because I know what it is like for one's family to be so far away, mine being in Mexico. I don't have to go through the dangerous adventures Odysseus experiences, but I do have to wait a long time before seeing them again.

"When in the land of Phaecians, a singer comes to town and relates the story of the battle at Troy, Odysseus' own story. Odysseus shed a tear, trying to hide it from the hospitable Phaecians. A couple of weeks ago I saw a television show about Puebla, Mexico, what I call my land. It showed the town's churches and schools and the town square. These things are part of my story and my life. It made me sad to be so far away, and I cried. Odysseus and I grieve when each hears his own story.

"Last year I spent Christmas in Mexico. To do so, I had to raise enough money for my plane ticket. I sometimes had to pass up going to the movies, and I walked straight through a store without buying that alluring black knitted sweater. I saw a wonderful new bike that called to me. I had enough money to buy it, but that was the money to go see my family. I passed up all these temptations in order to reach my goal. In Odysseus' journey back home, he confronts much greater temptations. He wants to hear the Siren's song. He enjoys being in Circe's halls eating and drinking, drinking and eating. He also had a chance to taste the Lotus flower to forget all his troubles. He passes up all these temptations to reach his home.

"If I ever met Odysseus, we would have much to talk about. When he was in Alcinoos' halls he had luxuries and was treated well. I also have luxuries and am treated well here, but like Odysseus, this doesn't matter to me. My family is a much greater "luxury" to have. Calypso holds down Odysseus in Ogygia for 8 years. Here I am held down by school, by my parents and many more things. If I were able to talk to Odysseus, the first thing I'd say would be, 'Odysseus of many wiles, I know how you feel.' "

Reading this essay left me in no doubt that (1) Karen had read the book, and (2) Karen had understood what she read. As well as achieving these primary assessment goals, the prompt provided her with an opportunity for further learning by inviting her to see the heroic dimension of her own life. I do not believe this happens when students match names with quotes or identify true or false statements.

The class results on this "test" did not fall in a bell-shaped curve because many more students were successful than a grade distribution chart would predict. Does this mean I have abandoned rigor in my teaching? I think not. Karen's analysis of Odysseus demonstrates recall of details, reading comprehension, and insight into character motivation. The fact that such achievement was possible for most of the class should be cause for celebration. Student success should be our goal, not our nemesis.

In one unsuccessful paper, a boy compared himself with Achilles solely on the basis of their shared strength and bravery. While applauding his strong self-image, I was critical of the absence of supporting evidence from the Trojan War or from Achilles's visit with Odysseus in the underworld. It is possible to separate those who have from those who have not read the text by using this kind of a prompt.

Conclusion

What I discovered as I read my students' essays was the relationship my students had developed with the text—for some a passing acquaintance, for others a bond. This is the information I need to assess the appropriateness of a particular book as well as the quality of my instruction. I was also able to measure the commitment of students as readers and writers. What more could I ask of an instrument?

Unfortunately, some teachers cling to objective tests for the power they allow them to wield over their students, but it is not real power and students know it. Real power resides in the literature, its power to move us and make us more than what we have been. It is to this end that I teach, to show students the joy of being so moved. In my class, we do not have time for silly games like multiple choice tests; we have too much reading and writing and talking to do.

PROCESS-BASED LITERATURE/ WRITING EXAMINATIONS

by Barbara King-Shaver
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It seems as though every professional education journal we pick up today contains at least one article on assessment—the "hot" topic for the nineties. As classrooms become more student-centered, with learners taking more responsibility for their own learning, researchers and teachers realize that changes in assessment have not kept pace with changes in instruction. We now understand learning as an interactive process, and in language arts, we believe students acquire literacy by using language to construct and reconstruct meaning. Thus, the methods we use to assess student learning need to reflect our philosophical beliefs and classroom practices.

The Traditional Final Examination

While constructing final examinations two years ago, my colleagues and I realized that the timed composition for the final exams we had been giving was very traditional. You might recognize the format; all of our previous final examinations sounded like this:

> "An epiphany is a sudden realization. In many works of literature the reader as well as a character in a work may have an epiphany of the true nature of a character, a place, or a situation.
>
> "Consider the major works of literature we have studied this year. In which works is there a significant epiphany? Choose two works, identify the epiphany in each, and explain in what way the epiphany is central to the story.
>
> "You have ninety minutes in which to plan, write, review and edit your response. Remember to follow the expository essay format."

Although our view of how students learn had changed dramatically during the past fifteen years, our final examinations had not. Therefore, we began searching for an assessment method that would more accurately reflect what goes on in our English classrooms during the year.

A Process-Based Examination

We began our search for a new final examination method of assessment by identifying what it is our students do in their English classes. During the year our students read and analyze literature through self-reflection and class discussion. They also write about literature, using the writing process and peer editing. Our students construct and reconstruct meaning, using reading, speaking, listening, and writing. We were looking for a method of assessment that mirrored these activities.

In the search, I found a description of a process-based examination in an article written by Patrick Dias of McGill University ("A Test-Driven Literary Response Curriculum," in *Passages to Literature*, NCTE, 1989, pp. 39–51). A process-based English examination, as Dias proposed it, is one that occurs over a number of days in a familiar, friendly setting. The general outline of such an examination would take the following form:

Day 1 is a focused freewriting, an individual activity whose objective is generating ideas. On this day, students freewrite about a given topic. Following the freewriting, students meet in small groups and share their responses. The writing is collected and a folder is begun for each student.

Day 2 is a reading day, a small-group activity whose objective is discussion. On this day, the class reads a story, poem, essay, or excerpt from a novel that is related to the topic of the previous day's freewriting. Students share their initial observations of the work in small groups, attempting to arrive at some consensus about what is happening in the work (theme, use of language, etc.). Students may take notes during their discussion, and all their notes are added to the folder and collected.

Day 3 is another reading day, this time an individual activity whose objective is drafting. On this day, students individually reread the work presented on the previous day and make additional notes if necessary. A writing topic is given, and students are then invited to write an essay on a topic related to the work of literature they read and discussed. Students begin drafting their papers, and they have use of all the notes in their folders. All their work is collected at the end of class and placed into their folders.

Day 4 is revising, an individual/group activity whose objective is editing. Folders are given back to students for revising and editing, and students work with peers for revision and editing comments. At the end of the day, their folders are collected.

Day 5 is both revising/editing, an individual activity whose objective is writing a final draft. After the final drafts are completed, the folders are collected and assessed.

The number of days may vary, depending on the length of the work read and the length of class periods. Teachers may decide on a schedule ahead of time and fit the process examination into this schedule. For example, with short class periods, two days may be given for revising and editing, although the students' work is collected each day.

We were attracted to the Dias model because the process-based examination tested composition and literature—the areas we wanted to test. Dias assumed that the students taking a process-based exam have had experience working in class in small groups and sharing their responses and written drafts for comments and revisions—our students had such experiences. Two aspects of the process-based model that we felt were important, aspects not included in the traditional final exam, were the peer discussion groups before writing and peer editing groups after writing. The use of peer input directly reflects what our students do all year as they read and write. It also supports our belief in collaborative learning and the making of meaning as a communal activity. We were not the only ones attracted to the Dias model: Quebec Province is now using a form of this process-based examination as its province-wide assessment.

Two Examples of Process-Based Examinations

My colleagues and I have developed process-based final examinations to be used in English classes at South Brunswick High

School. Seniors in a world literature class begin their exam process on Monday by reading the short story "Disappearing," a tale about a wife who is overweight and tries to disappear because both she and her husband are unhappy with her body. She takes up dieting and swimming, becoming obsessed with losing weight. The wife becomes thinner and thinner, pushing herself to lose even more weight. She hopes one day to become so thin that she can disappear into the water.

After reading the story individually, the students break into small groups to discuss the literal and figurative interpretation of the text and how the ideas presented in the text parallel other works read during the year or how the ideas present an observation on the ideas in another work. During the small-group discussions, students may take notes.

Many of the students writing about "Disappearing" take the theme of transformation, for example, and apply it to characters in works they have read, noting a physical change in Gregor in *Metamorphosis*, an emotional change in Gertrude in *Hamlet*, and a psychological change in the lawyer in *The Bet*.

At home, students are told to choose one idea that emerged from their group discussion or occurred to them individually. They are expected to begin drafting an essay that will discuss the story and will use at least three works read during the year to further illustrate their points.

On Tuesday, students meet with a peer editor to obtain feedback for revising and editing their papers. The students take turns serving as peer editors for each other. The peer editing comments are written down and attached to the draft. On Wednesday, the students write a second draft, using their peer feedback as needed, and on Thursday, they prepare their final draft, attaching peer comments and previous drafts.

Another example of a process examination, given to sophomores taking American literature, includes class discussion of the reading but not peer feedback during the writing process. The teachers of this course are considering a revision to include peer feedback.

On the first day, students are given a one-page text, Faulkner's "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech," to read in class. While reading, they are asked to record thoughts or questions they have in a reader-response journal. The students share their responses and questions during a class discussion, analyzing Faulkner's speech. The students may take notes.

On the second day, the writing assignment is introduced: The students are asked to discuss what Faulkner means when he describes literature as the "record of man" and "pillars to help him endure and prevail," and they are asked to apply these ideas to two works they have read during the year. The students are further asked to include at least one literary term studied to support their discussion. The students may use their reader-response journals and class notes as they begin prewriting. All their work is collected at the end of class.

On the third day, the prewriting is handed back to the students, and they begin drafting their essays. Once again, all paperwork is collected at the end of class, to be returned on the fourth day when students will revise and edit their papers.

Process-Based Examination Caveats

My colleagues and I are pleased with the process-based exams we use, and we have found that our students are successful. There are, however, some things to keep in mind when planning a process exam. For one thing, the text needs to be short enough for students to read and respond to within the time frame (2–3 pages). A text this length is not always easy to find. The teacher/test supervisor should not intervene in the reading, discussing, and writing components of the assessment; however, the teacher should provide a supportive environment.

During the year prior to the examinations, students need experience participating in small-group discussions and sharing and responding to each other's writing. If students cannot function productively in groups, they should not be forced to work this way. Process-based examinations are only one form of assessment. During the school year, students should also experience shorter timed-writing responses (a type of writing they may be asked to do on essay exams in college or on the AP exam). No one method of assessment is best for every student. Some students may not be able to communicate their complete understanding of a text in writing.

Conclusion

The teachers who have been using the process-based final exam for two years are satisfied with it. They continue to revise their own models to fit their particular classes and time schedules. As senior English teacher, Harry Schultz, notes, "This type of a final is more subjective; it more closely reflects what we know to be true within our school system. I want students to apply what they have learned." A colleague of Harry's, Laura Ross, adds, "I really enjoyed reading these papers. I enjoyed them more than the exams we had been giving previously."

Currently, all thirteen of the teachers in our department are using some version of process exams, not just as final exams but during the year as well. We believe in process-based exams and in an overall process approach to learning. As a department, we are in process ourselves. Each year we review our assessment methods and revise them. Because we are using teacher-developed materials, we can fit the exam to what we teach and to our student population each year.

In conclusion, the process-based examination reflects what occurs in English classes throughout the year. A process exam integrates reading and writing, and it supports the writing process, the reading process, collaborative learning, and a process approach to learning. In short, the process examination is authentic assessment because it reflects the collaborative reading and writing processes that people use in college, on the job, and in life.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT: STUDENTS AS PRODUCERS

by Henry Kiernan
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H. L. Mencken asserted, in his 1908 essay "Education," that "a man's mental powers are to be judged, not by his ability to accomplish things that are possible to every man foolish enough to attempt them, but by his capacity for doing things beyond the power of other men. Education, as we commonly observe it today, works toward the former, rather than toward the latter end." Mencken's sardonic wit is not lost on us today. Last year began with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) announcing that the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) would in the future include the writing of an impromptu essay, and the year ended with ETS announcing that the essay will be optional on the SAT.

Like most districts trapped in a routinized array of state-mandated multiple-choice tests, the teachers in our school district were frustrated by the subtle yet real constraints of "teaching for the test." Even though the administration and teachers in our district firmly oppose such practices, when test scores are published in

area newspapers comparing scores across the region, the pressure to teach for the test stressfully emerges in every classroom.

We never *denied* that assessment measures were *important*, but that multiple choice tests and 30-minute essay prompts left much to be desired as the sole public measure of student competency. We wanted to regain control of instruction and to have some choice in assessing students' progress beyond the state tests and the SAT. We wanted a tool that would link instruction with assessment, and to some degree, provide students with opportunities to see their own capacity "to go beyond" the minimum skills assessed by state tests. The writing portfolio gave us the control and choice we wanted.

What Could We Agree About?

How did we arrive at portfolios as an alternative measure of assessment? As a department, we began by drawing up a list of "we agree" statements. These statements of philosophy were difficult to write because all 28 members of the department had to agree by consensus on some basic principles. In the end, we arrived at twenty statements that we agreed about as a department:

1. Process writing should be the cornerstone of the English curriculum.
2. All teachers should provide frequent writing opportunities for students.
3. Students should learn to write in a variety of writing genres.
4. Students should feel confident with their writing abilities.
5. Teachers should share their own writing with students.
6. Teachers should share their feelings about writing with students.
7. Students should achieve a sufficient level in grammar to develop syntax and variety in their writing.
8. Students need to respond to most readings, discussions, lectures, and films in writing or speaking. The use of literature logs and notebooks offers opportunities for teachers to assess students' prereading experiences as well as what students are thinking about what they are reading.
9. Every student should be proficient in the use of computer-assisted composition.
10. Students need to apply reading to their own lives.
11. Students need to be taught interpretive skills and given opportunities to apply them.
12. Students should be asked to support their assertions/interpretations. Through the use of questioning techniques and teaching a variety of interpretive skills, teachers should model interpretive strategies.
13. Students should be able to take and advocate a position in writing and speaking. Students should have the comfort and ability to raise questions.
14. Teachers need to model the strategies of good readers.
15. Students need to develop an appetite for reading, and their teachers need to provide frequent and varied reading experiences.
16. Literature should target students' learning styles, and therefore students need choices in reading assignments.
17. Vocabulary development should be connected to reading and writing experiences in the classroom.
18. Students need to develop confidence in speaking and writing abilities.
19. Goals of instruction are constant, but the materials we use may vary. We therefore agree about the need for an ongoing exchange of ideas and teaching content in order to maintain a uniform scope and sequence within the department's curriculum.
20. We agree to stress the importance of interdisciplinary efforts.

After designing the list, we all agreed that our first statement, "Process writing should be the cornerstone of the English curriculum," was our most important mission. We agreed that each student needed to write at least one writing assignment per week that received some teacher remarks and/or conferencing time. We agreed that for each of the four marking periods of study, students would select at least three edited pieces that they believed represented their best work during that term. We agreed that students would also write a letter relating why they selected these works and discussing their progress in writing proficiency.

So, beginning with last school year, writing portfolios were instituted in grades 7–12. We already had the practice in place of maintaining a writing folder for students in which they kept their journals, graded papers, drafts, papers to be revised, etc. The portfolio became the writing folder in which students kept "publishable" writing, those pieces which had been reviewed and carefully revised through teacher-student conferencing and peer editing strategies. It was in their writing portfolio that students began to measure their progress, not just within a few months or a school year, but over several years.

In many ways, the art department portfolios were models for us and served as a sound rationale for students to be involved in the assessment process. The same thinking processes used by art students in the selection of their painting and drawing were readily applied to the writing portfolio.

By the end of the school year, students and teachers reviewed a year's worth of work and cooperatively selected three writing pieces as representative of their best work for the year, pieces that students wanted to keep for the following school year. They also wrote an assessment of these works answering the following questions:

1. What makes this your best piece?
2. How did you go about writing it?
3. What makes your most effective piece different from your least effective piece?
4. What writing goals do you need to set for yourself for next year?

Thus, writing portfolios became the practical strategy to implement our belief that the cornerstone of our curriculum is process writing.

Results

The portfolios became the vehicle to document student progress in writing skill development and self-assessment. We began the school year by returning portfolios to 2,500 students. For the first time, teachers and students had collections of best work and benchmarks to use for planning goals to improve writing proficiency. In addition, teachers and students reviewed the first writing sample of this school year and compared it to the previous year's work to assess strengths and weaknesses.

The most wonderful, unanticipated result was the dimension of student thinking contained in last year's written assessments. Students wrote honestly about their frustrations, their strengths and weaknesses, and their need to learn more. And, in their portfolios, for the first time, they self-selected the best they were able to do and recorded their thoughts about the writing process. In addition to a self-assessment of their progress, students wrote about the process of revision, their own style, and writing

challenges, such as why a piece did not succeed despite the amount of time and effort expended.

We are just beginning to learn that students have their own theories about the writing process. We need to help them participate in this discovery by teaching them to become producers and to expand their capacity to learn. When students find something they really like and are good at, they are able to rise to heights of great achievement, explain Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi in their 1988 work, *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness* (New York: Cambridge University Press).

Future Plans

We have begun to determine the range or modes and genres on a grade 7–12 basis. For example, in grades 7 and 8, students need to include samples of letters, journal selections, poetry, responses to literature, as well as narrative and descriptive pieces. This work will serve to define a valid set of writing samples and models, a set defined by our own faculty. We are also working with colleagues in the math, foreign language, and social studies departments to bring portfolio assessment strategies to content areas beyond English and art classes.

Multiple choice tests and state mandated 30-minute writing prompts are "one-shot deals" or more precisely "shots in the dark." They do not begin to assess students' abilities over time and cannot test our students' capacity to learn. Unless we, teachers and administrators, begin to reclaim the control and choice of assessment in our schools, Mencken's criticism will only continue to apply to education.

ELIMINATING THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF ABILITY GROUPING ON LOW-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

by Wendell Schwartz and Dan Galloway
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The practice of grouping students for instruction according to their perceived levels of ability is commonplace in schools throughout the country. Core curriculum subjects—English, mathematics, science, and social studies—are routinely divided into classes geared to different levels of student ability. The rationale given is that the academic needs of all students will be better met when the core subjects are taught to groups of students with similar capabilities or groups of students demonstrating prior levels of achievement. Students with high levels of ability will be able to move at a faster pace, cover more material, and respond to greater challenges, the argument goes. Students with low levels of ability will be able to move at a slower pace in order to gain understanding, remediate deficiencies, and ultimately increase achievement, by the same reasoning. Thus, because of the diversity of the student population, ability grouping has been considered to be the most efficient method of addressing individual needs and coping with individual differences.

In recent years, however, ability grouping has come under substantial criticism. A growing body of research refutes those long-standing assumptions, citing evidence of many undesirable and negative effects, primarily in lower-level classes (Kerckhoff, A. C. 1986. "Effects of Ability Grouping in British Secondary Schools." *American Sociological Review* 51: 842–58; Oakes, J. 1985. *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality.* New Haven: Yale University Press; Trimble, K. D., and Sinclair, R. L. (1987). "On the Wrong Track: Ability Grouping and the Threat to Equity." *Equity and Excellence* 22: 15–21).

Assessing Our Own Practice

These research findings provided the impetus for an assessment of the ability-grouping practice within the core curriculum at Stevenson High School because our school is committed to providing opportunities for success for *all* students. What we found out about our ability-grouping practice was that:

1. Movement between ability groups was infrequent.
2. Student achievement in the higher-level groups was high.
3. Student achievement in the lower-level classes had become "watered down."
4. Students in lower-level classes were less motivated than students in higher-level classes.
5. Students placed in lower-level groups remained in lower-level groups year after year.

It became obvious, at least to us, that our ability-grouping design was not promoting success for lower-ability students. In fact, it was perpetuating their lower-level status. Our challenge became how to modify ability-grouping practices at Stevenson High School in order to promote greater success for lower-level students while maintaining the successful programs for the higher-level students.

A Pilot Reform Program

We decided to initiate a pilot reform project in the English Department. In 1989–90, the lower-level ability groups (basic and modified) were summarily eliminated in the junior-year English classes. Students who had been scheduled to be in these lower-level groups were placed in the regular college-preparatory level instead. The upper levels (accelerated and honors/advanced placement) remained intact. We began our reform efforts by modifying existing ability-grouping practices rather than eliminating ability grouping all together. Significant changes resulted from this decision: students in junior-year English received the same general content regardless of their ability section; lower-achieving students were no longer subjected to diminished expectations or "watered down" material; and extensive support services were established to help lower-achieving students meet the expectations of these more demanding classes.

The support services we offered consisted of mandatory tutorials in composition and reading for any students unable to demonstrate proficiency in these skills. The tutorials met three times each week in place of a student's study hall or unscheduled time. Students were required to continue attending the tutorial only until they could meet the criteria for composition proficiency by demonstrating that they could write successful, multiple-paragraph essays and by maintaining at least a C- average in their English classes. The tutorials, held in the school's reading/writing center, were conducted by teachers in lieu of their required study hall supervision. Half of the students who would have otherwise been placed in the below-average ability groups met the proficiency criteria within twelve weeks. By the end of the first semester 80 percent of the students demonstrated proficiency. Because these students were able to pass a course where they faced higher expectations and where they were presented with more challenging content than would have been the case in the former system, we felt the results of the pilot were significant.

Due to its success, our program was expanded to first-year English in 1990–91. Again, lower-achieving students were placed in the regular level. The only exception made was for the relatively few students (4–5 percent) having learning disabilities serious

enough to impair learning in a regular classroom environment. At the end of the first three-week student assessment, any first-year student achieving less than a C- average was closely monitored by the teacher. By the end of the sixth week, any students who had not raised their average were assigned to tutorial sessions stressing reading and study skills. These sessions also took place in the reading/writing center under the direction of English teachers. Students were required to attend three times a week during their study hall until their grade average rose to at least a C-.

Our expanded program, while still in its infancy, is meeting with significant success. More than half the students originally assigned to the study/reading skill tutorials were able to return to their regular study hall, earning at least a C- in their college preparatory English classes. We believe that the English Department at Stevenson High School has addressed the negative effects of ability grouping for lower-achieving students while at the same time maintaining a very successful and large honors program for its higher-achieving students.

Requirements of the Program

Clearly, a program of this type requires a philosophical commitment, and it requires a commitment of resources, both human and financial, as well: teaching staff needs to be provided; workshops, meetings, and inservices must be arranged on a continuing basis to maintain teacher tutorial skills; and an appropriately equipped site, able to accommodate 1–3 tutors and up to 15 students, must be available throughout the school day. Computers are definitely an asset in a tutorial center, but there is no need for their purchase to dominate the planning or the program itself. The learning center is, above all, a people-oriented place where students receive direct and personalized assistance.

Our tutorial support program has been successful in supplanting lower-level ability groups. It allows students equal access to course content and places them in a more positive classroom environment. It does not require students to continue in a remedial situation any longer than necessary because they are not bound by the conventions of semesters or Carnegie units. As soon as proficiency is demonstrated and the criteria are met, the tutorial requirement ends. It is important to mention that even after students have met expectations, the tutorials continue to be available on a voluntary basis. Students are reminded of the availability and invited to drop in at the center whenever they need assistance. Well over half of the students receiving instruction in the center visit it voluntarily, not as part of the assigned tutoring program.

However, as successful as the tutorial program has been, it continues to be reviewed and revised. Although our program was conceived as an English program, it clearly needs to be supported by teachers from other disciplines, especially those in which reading and writing are central to the learning process. One of its most significant failings has been its inability to involve as tutors staff members from departments other than English. To this end, we feel that if teachers from any and all disciplines were encouraged and trained to work with the students in the tutorial program, this approach would more successfully address the content-related issues which often arise when working with students. Furthermore, we feel such an approach would help integrate and support the basic skills of reading, writing, and studying throughout the curriculum, rather than address them primarily as only the concerns of the English faculty. The second major need for adjustment in the tutorial program involves a more careful monitoring of students once they have completed the tutorials. We feel this needs to be done in an effort to ensure that students placed in the regular-level classes continue to be successful and that students are called back to the tutorial if their work falls to a D level.

It is not always possible nor advisable to replicate models of reform practices. Schools differ, as do departments within the same school. Consequently, there is no standard recipe for success when initiating ability-grouping reform. What can and should be replicated, though, is the philosophy that all students deserve to receive rich, stimulating, challenging, and positive educational experiences that help them develop socially and academically. When this philosophy guides ability-grouping reform, it is a beginning to providing excellence, equity, and success for *all* students.

THE RHETORICAL STANCE OF ASSESSMENT

by Robert Perrin
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Over the last five years, I have presented numerous workshops on evaluation and grading (the ongoing assessment that takes place with our students), but I remember one particular session—several Octobers ago—because it changed the way I discuss assumptions about evaluation and the rhetorical stance of assessment. Let me explain what happened.

During the workshop, we did the standard workshop things—evaluating and grading samples of students' writing and then commenting upon what we had done. We explored ways to note errors of different kinds. We explored ways to comment on a variety of rhetorical missteps. We explored ways to offer advice. We explored ways to prompt the best work from students. We tried to reach a consensus about what constituted an "A" paper, a "B" paper, and so on. If this sounds familiar, it should; this is the kind of evaluation and grading workshop that takes place on most campuses across the nation.

I left that October's workshop troubled, but I had a difficult time deciding what the trouble was. The session had been generally effective in its own workshopish way, but like most workshops, the teachers were evaluating student writing in an academic vacuum. Concentrating as it did on the technical application of assessment skills, the workshop lacked a rhetorical context. Although the situation did not please me, I did not know how to address the problem.

Several weeks later, I reread an article I had assigned for a graduate seminar on teaching writing, a favorite of mine because it helped new teachers of composition to see the importance of introducing students to the triad of role, reader, and purpose. That day, as I reread the article, Wayne Booth's "The Rhetorical Stance" (*College Composition and Communication*, 14 [October 1963]: 139–45), I saw it from a new perspective—from the perspective of an evaluator and grader of student writing. Immediately I saw a way to address my problem of establishing a context for workshops on writing assessment and for the evaluation and grading of students' papers in general.

The Rhetorical Stance

The value of Booth's article has long been clear for writers. His suggestion that we "[discover] and [maintain] in any writing situation a balance among the three elements that are at work in any communicative effort: the available arguments about the subject itself, the interests and peculiarities of the audience, and the voice, the implied character, of the speaker" has helped teachers and students alike (p. 142). And the value of Booth's article is equally clear for evaluators and graders of student writing—if we acknowledge that our markings, notes, extended comments, and grades constitute "a writing situation," one that

serves a rhetorical purpose and that takes place in a context which should be fully analyzed and understood.

Let me explain how I applied Booth's definitions of role, reader, and purpose to the assessment of student writing and some of the slight variations I spun to help me explain to teachers of writing how to establish a rhetorical context for their grading.

Role

The writer's role—in this case, the specialized writer-evaluator—is determined by his or her knowledge of the topics of student writing, attitude toward students' topics, and perspective on their topics. Our roles instinctively change as we evaluate and grade our students' work. And we would do well for ourselves and for our students to articulate the changes in these roles as they apply to different courses, different groups of students, and different writing projects.

As teachers of writing reviewing journal entries, for example, we often assume roles as nonjudgmental friends or confidantes—people providing supportive responses and prompts for additional writing. When reading drafts of papers, we often function as copy editors, a primarily supportive role. In contrast, when responding to argumentative writing, most of us assume the role of the "opponent"—regardless of how we feel about the subject. When evaluating researched writing, we often recreate ourselves as uninformed nonspecialists—a role that we are sometimes in already.

Most teachers of writing shift among these and other roles when they assess students' writing, and they do so often without articulating these changes for themselves or for their students. Students, unfortunately, do not always understand these changing perspectives and, as a result, feel that we have unfairly modified our expectations. However, by describing these changes in roles for ourselves and for our students, we can clarify what we do when we assume different roles as assessors.

Reader

The readers of our evaluations—our students—comprise a special group with special "interests and peculiarities," to use Booth's phrase (p. 142). However, we often fail to acknowledge their needs as readers, in our efforts to respond to their written work efficiently and thoroughly. We would never write articles without considering our readers' educational levels, experiences, concerns, interests, prejudices, and preferences regarding development, word choice, style, tone, and language. Yet we often comment on our students' papers without acknowledging that they, too, comprise a real audience, with real needs and expectations.

Before we evaluate and grade writing projects, we should, as a result, ask ourselves honestly what we can expect our students to know about technical editing: Do they know the correction symbols we use? Do they know the technical terminology we use? If they do not, then we must provide them with clear explanations and perhaps samples. We should also ask ourselves what interests them in what we mark and write: they want to know what they are doing right; they want to know what they are doing wrong; they want to know what they can do to improve; they want to know what grade they will get, and so on.

As logical as this audience analysis is, many teachers of writing do not acknowledge fully enough the needs of their student audiences when they evaluate and grade papers. By acknowledging these needs—and accommodating ourselves to them—we can ensure that the markings, notes, comments, and grades that we produce are useful for our student audience.

Purpose

The third feature of Booth's rhetorical triad is purpose, and considering the purpose—or more often purposes—of our evaluation and grading is something we do not do systematically enough. Rather than assess student writing by fiat, assuming that our sole responsibility is to show student writers the errors of their writing ways, we should articulate the reasons for assessing different kinds of writing projects in different ways.

With journal writing, our assessments most often are intended to prompt further thinking and the extended exploration of ideas. Early in the term, one major purpose of our assessment is to encourage students to strengthen their communication skills; in a sense, assessments early in the term offer advice for improvement—and consequently look forward. Near the end of the term, our judgments are often less personal, more removed, and more abstractly critical. We may, in fact, commend improvement—looking backward to earlier work—but assessments of final papers most often apply rigid standards.

For teachers, the value of articulating these varied purposes is clear. By acknowledging different goals, we free ourselves to comment on papers in different ways, and we do not have to worry that our students will be confused if we do not mark every feature, major or minor. By acknowledging to our students the different purposes for different kinds of assessments, we will illuminate for them the markings we do, and our students will begin to see why we do not assess all projects in the same fashion.

Conclusion

This rhetorical approach to assessment—the clear and specific articulation of the teacher's role in the evaluation process, of the students' interests and characteristics as readers of our assessments, and of the varied purposes that assessments can serve—objectifies many of the assumptions about evaluation and grading that experienced teachers already make intuitively. Yet these principles may not be clear for novice teachers of writing—new teaching assistants and adjuncts—and we may need to discuss these theoretical issues before we concentrate on the technical features of evaluation and grading. The technical aspect of evaluation and grading must take its meaning from a larger rhetorical context. Through conscious analysis of these interrelated principles, we can improve the ways in which we assess student writing—especially if we keep in mind that our written responses to student work, like all writing, will be better if we acknowledge and accommodate ourselves to the rhetorical context in which they exist.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Wayne C. Booth. "The Rhetorical Stance." *College Composition and Communication* 14 (Oct. 1963): 139–45.

A seminal article describing the importance of rhetorical contexts (role, reader, and purpose or subject) for effective writing, illustrated with three "corruptions"—the pedant's stance, the advertiser's stance, and the entertainer's stance—all of which are unbalanced in some way. Exploring Booth's triad as it applies to evaluating and grading writing will suggest why assessment is also more effective when it is done in a rhetorical context.

Peter Elbow. "Embracing Contraries in the Teaching Process." *College Composition and Communication* 45 (Apr. 1983): 327–39.

A pivotal article that addresses the dichotomy of trying to be both loyal to students and loyal to academic standards. Elbow suggests that effective teachers of writing manage to do both because they "spell out requirements and criteria as clearly and

concretely as possible" while offering individual encouragement. His evaluations of teachers' and students' roles in the writing process are particularly illuminating.

Elaine O. Lees, "Evaluating Student Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 30 (Dec. 1979): 370–74.

A single-focus article that usefully explains seven purposes that evaluating can serve: correcting, emoting, describing, suggesting, questioning, reminding, and assigning. Although this brief article does not fully address the rhetorical context, providing only passing references to the role a teaacher assumes and the needs of students as readers, its detailed discussion of the kinds of comments and the purposes they serve is very helpful.

Mina P. Shaughnessy, "Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 27 (Oct. 1976): 234–39.

A valuable article describing the different, sequential roles that teachers of developmental writing often assume as they ultimately try to relate to and work with their student writers. The general roles that Shaughnessy describes are parallel to the roles assumed by many evaluators and graders of student writing.

Software Review:

"The Writing Cycle"—software to accompany the text by Clela Allphin Hoggatt, published by Roxbury Publishing Company.

by Wendy Paterson
Buffalo State College, New York

Finally, a writing heuristic with a popular word processor (PC-LITE, published by Quicksoft) that follows the dictates of teaching the writing process both philosophically and practically—"The Writing Cycle" software published by Roxbury, a small company in California. This software guides a writer from invention to revision—checking, questioning, encouraging, and even nagging as a good English teacher would.

"The Writing Cycle" software program is arranged in three sections. Section One walks a student through the writing stages needed to produce any type of essay or composition from prewriting to draft. It includes activities to promote prewriting (listing, clustering, freewriting, pentading); organizing and supporting topics; writing openings and closings (ten suggested introductory paragraph types, and three types of concluding paragraphs); writing the first draft with full PC-LITE functions; and a checklist for revision. Section Two offers guidance in the use of eight different writing strategies: describing, narrating, explaining a process, classifying and dividing, defining, comparing and contrasting, showing cause and effect, and convincing others. Section Three shows the student the how's and why's of revision.

"The Writing Cycle" software is flexible enough to allow entry at any point, and the program can be used to assist developmental writers with almost any topic or format for writing essays.

Although there are other good programs on the market to assist the reluctant writer, "The Writing Cycle" software can be used without a text. It can form the basis for all compositions, establishing a writing plan for students who have never mastered the process. For those students who find invention awkward, this program pokes and prods to get ideas from even the "mossiest stone." For the chronically disorganized, a patient and non-judgmental teacher (their glowing PC) gently molds ideas into a structure that even the most abstract-random learning style can live with. Unique to this software are the activities on "openings and closings," for many the two most worrisome parts of a paper. These easy-to-use formats fit virtually every need, and they seem to offer students a manageable and concrete guide that can be used and reused until it becomes comfortable.

The section offering writing strategies also lends itself to the first-year composition class. In my work with developmental writers, I have found that such suggested strategies help students to expand ideas and create more than one type of original text (would that all essays could be "personal narratives"). These strategies also promote critical reading. From a whole language perspective, readers discover the structure of text from the writer's point of view. As readers, they learn to discover these structures and use them to improve reading comprehension, and as writers, they can rely on these suggested formats until they develop a more secure sense of essay development.

The last section on revision is perhaps the most innovative. Here the software offers sample essays with those typical errors that English teachers can recite in their sleep—run-ons, fragments, usage, agreement, and coherence errors. This is more than a fatuous grammar lesson; it is grammar in application. The student is given a model of a revised first draft, along with reasonable "plain English" explanations of the suggested revisions. Then a second model essay is presented for the student to revise.

The strength of this program is its sound educational roots, and it is also technically delightful. The software uses colorful, eye-pleasing presentations of text with user-friendly menus and easy-to-follow directions.

If you have adopted word processing as the basis for your composition class, this program will fit right in. Whatever your choice of processor, Roxbury includes PC-LITE as a "freebee" with the purchase of this program—not a bad deal for the price. Research supports the notion that word processing does indeed improve the general quantity of writing and improve a writer's attitude, and programs such as "The Writing Cycle" software offer intervention strategies that will have a direct, positive effect on the quality of student writing and a lasting effect on creative, productive thinking.

I recommend this program, but I suggest you try the "Activities Diskette" for "The Writing Cycle" yourself. Ask for a free demonstration disk by writing Roxbury Publishing Company, (P.O. Box 491044, Los Angeles CA 90049) or calling (213) 653-1068.

Book Review

Rei Noguchi, *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing*, Urbana: NCTE, 1991.

by William F. Williams
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

Rei Noguchi, in *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing*, directs his efforts to the teachers of writing who feel that they must devote too much time to the teaching of formal grammar.

Noguchi cites the research, starting with Hoyt's 1906 study and ending with Hillocks's 1986 summarization of grammar instruction studies. He finds that the research overwhelmingly concludes that there is no connection between the teaching of formal grammar and the improvement of writing. He then suggests that perhaps the failure is a result of the way in which formal grammar is taught. He proposes a simpler, more efficient approach to grammar instruction.

The new approach to grammar instruction attempts to limit the time needed for formal instruction by limiting the categories and terms being taught and by taking advantage of native speakers' tacit knowledge. All native speakers can convert declarative sentences into yes-no questions, and all native speakers can convert declarative sentences into questions by adding the appropriate tag question at the end. The yes-no and tags enable teachers to get at students' underlying knowledge of the grammar required to perform the conversions of declarative sentences. Noguchi argues that teachers can aid students in recognizing what he views as errors that occur frequently and that are serious by exploiting the tacit knowledge of pronouns, verbs, sentences. He argues that, by teaching them to isolate and identify the "basic categories of grammar," students learn to recognize and correct their errors and that his method of grammar instruction takes less classroom time.

Noguchi may be correct in claiming that reducing the amount of time spent in formal grammar instruction is a worthwhile endeavor. However, his belief that a simplified method will teach students to recognize and correct their errors seems to lack a valid basis. In an endnote, he points out that a study that he conducted with a variety of grade levels showed that the students taught with his method of grammar instruction performed equally to students taught in the traditional manner of identifying fragments, run-ons, and comma splices. I have two problems with his study and hypothesis. First, the students studied were tested on the identification of errors, an operation which has nothing to do with real writing. And second, the study proved that his method was only as good as a method that has been demonstrated to have no correlation with writing improvement. Use of a nonwriting task in a writing class misunderstands the nature of writing, whether the task be drill for skill in traditional grammar or converting declarative sentences to questions to make students aware of their underlying syntactic knowledge.

Noguchi argues that we must teach students to recognize and correct surface features because business and professional readers react negatively to the errors. He also argues that "the persistence of unconventional writing well into the college years and even beyond suggests that editing without recognition will not work" (p. 14). However, I am unconvinced that proposing an alternative that works only as well as a system that does not work is a very strong argument.

Announcements

Quarterly "Best Article" Award

The Conference on English Leadership announced the recipients and runners-up of its 1991 "Best Article" award for articles published in the *Quarterly* during 1990. The award honors the authors of the the best article published in 1990, so chosen because of its value to the department chair, the quality of its writing, and the originality of what it said.

Drs. Jane A. Zaharias and Kathleen T. Benghiat, of the Department of Specialized Instructional Programs at Cleveland State University in Ohio, won the award for the lead article, "To Be, Or Not To Be, a Second-Year Teacher," published in the October 1990 *Quarterly*, an issue devoted to supervision and evaluation. In the article, Zaharias and Benghiat describe a program that they developed to help department chairs work with first-year teachers, one that will encourage them to continue as second-year teachers.

Jane Zaharias was presented with a plaque during the Secondary School Luncheon at the NCTE Annual Convention in Seattle. She also accepted the award for her coauthor, Kathleen Benghiat, who was unable to attend.

Honorable mention for the award went to Susan Argyle, assistant professor at Slippery Rock University, and Fred Feitler, associate professor at Kent State University, for their article, "Student Teaching: Smoothing Out the Rough Spots," published in the February 1990 student teachers issue, and to Carol Jago, of Santa Monica High School in California, for her article, "A Journal for Classroom Observations," published in the October 1990 supervision and evaluation issue.

The judging committee included Tom Jones, Wyoming Valley West High School, Plymouth, PA; Willa Mae Kippes, Valley High School, Gilcrest, CO; and Kevin McHugh, Finneytown Junior/Senior High School, Cincinnati, OH.

SPECIAL GUEST-EDITED ISSUE: PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

by Lela M. DeToye
Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

As guest editor for the February 1993 issue, I am issuing a call for manuscripts that look at partnerships between English/language arts teachers and parents and even the wider community. In particular, I am looking for articles describing success stories in:

—methods to secure parental support for curriculum changes, detracking efforts, problems dealing with censorship;
—school/parent contacts;
—ways to promote parental involvement and/or volunteerism;
—"Back to School Nights";
—business and industry partnerships with English/language arts departments.

Address articles and inquiries to: Lela M. DeToye, Assistant Professor, School of Education, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, IL 62026–1122. (618-692-3433).

NEW COMMITTEES FOR CEL

The CEL Executive Committee is now establishing seven standing committees to more directly serve the needs of members. These committees are Concerns and Challenges for Leadership in Urban Schools, in Rural Schools, in Elementary Schools, in Middle/Junior High Schools, in Independent Schools; Research into Practice: Issues in English Language Arts; and Programs and Practices in Developing English/Language Arts Leadership.

Each committee will be composed of a maximum of ten members and will meet in conjunction with the preconvention CEL workshop. English leaders who are members in good standing of NCTE and of CEL and who are interested in being considered for committee positions should send a letter of interest and a vita to Wendell Schwartz, CEL Past Chair, Adlai Stephenson High School, 1670 West Highway 22, Prairie View, IL 60069.

The term of office for committee members will be three years (November to November). However, the first committee members will draw lots to determine who will serve one, two, or three years.

If you serve your school in any leadership capacity, or if you are interested in issues of English leadership, you are invited to become a member of CEL by contacting NCTE Headquarters. Don't delay; join today.

DOCTORAL STUDENT ASSEMBLY OF NCTE

The Doctoral Student Assembly will be meeting in Washington, D.C. at the Spring Conference of NCTE. This affiliate group has official membership status within the NCTE and is specially designated for those graduate students who are contemplating or carrying on English doctoral studies. Its stated purpose is "to provide a support system for doctoral students as well as to promote networking among doctoral students." A national newsletter is published twice yearly with semiannual meetings conducted at the two major NCTE conventions. Membership fees are $5.00/year and may be mailed to Cheryl Christian, 12417 Wycliff Lane, Austin, TX 78727. Please make checks payable to DSA-NCTE.

OAKTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S 1992 CONFERENCE ON TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING

The title this year is, "Critical Thinking/Critical Literacy: The Challenges of Technology, Culture, and Creativity." The conference will be held April 1–4, 1992, at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza hotel in downtown Chicago. Registration for the conference will be $225 for the first person from an institution and $210 for each additional person. The fee for a preconference workshop will be $65. Fees cover the costs of the continental breakfasts, the receptions, brunch on Saturday, and lots of coffee breaks. Tentative schedule:

Wednesday, April 1, 2:00–6:00: There will be four preconference workshops. One, designed to examine problems, issues, and successful approaches to teaching critical thinking in the multicultural classroom, will be conducted by John Matsui, Assistant Director of the Student Learning Center at the University of California, Berkeley. His title for the workshop is "So, Why Can't They Learn?: Attending to What's Lost in the Translation." A second will be the "Introduction to Critical Literacy" workshop that faculty in the Critical Literacy Project traditionally offer as a pre-conference. The third will be a session in which Bernajean Porter, software engineer and consultant on computer technology at Glenbook South High School, explores media literacy, critical thinking, computer technology, and teaching. The fourth, "Advanced Design Workshop," is for "advanced" conferees only—faculty who have been working on teaching critical thinking for some time. It will be led by Lynda Jerit of Oakton's Critical Literacy Project. In the evening, at 8:00, John Matsui will give a keynote address which he has titled, "Teaching Critical Thinking: The Dilemma of 'Culture Gap,' Rigor, and Multiple Literacies in the Classroom." A reception will follow.

Thursday, April 2: The day will begin at 8:30 with a keynote address by Roger Schank, Director of the Institute for Learning Sciences at Northwestern University. His address is titled "No More Teachers' Dirty Looks: How Technology Can Humanize Education." The keynote will be followed by three sets of "breakout sessions," or workshops (10:00–11:30; 1:15–2:45; and 3:00–4:30). At each of these times conferees will have seven, and possibly eight, workshops to choose from, some of which will be double sessions and, again, sessions will focus on conference themes. There will be either a reception or an informal get together later that evening.

Friday, April 3: There will be four sets of seven or eight workshops (8:15–9:45; 10:00–11:30; 1:15–2:45; and 3:00–4:30). Again, some of those will be double sessions and, again, sessions will focus on conference themes. There will be either a reception or an informal get together later that evening.

Saturday, April 4: There will be a small "bank" of breakout sessions as well as time and space for meetings of special interest groups. This will be followed by a closing, keynote address, "Creativity and Resilient Thinking: From Surviving to Thriving," which will be given by Salvatore Maddi, Professor of Psychology at U. C., Irvine. The conference will end by noon.

In addition to Roger Schank and John Matsui, confirmed presenters include Nancy Goldberger and Mary Belenky, coauthors of *Women's Ways of Knowing;* Stephen Brookfield, author of *The Skillful Teacher;* faculty of the Oakton College Critical Literacy Project; Ralph Johnson, editor of *Informal Logic;* Mark Weinstein and Wendy Oxman-Michelli, Codirectors of the Critical Thinking Institute, Montclair State College; Chet Meyers, author of *Teaching Students to Think Critically;* John Chaffee, author of *Critical Thinking;* and Beau Fly Jones, author of *Dimensions of Thinking and Cognitive Instruction.*

A room at the Holiday Inn will cost $98/night, single or double. The hotel comes equipped with a restaurant, a bar, a work-out room, a pool, and a great view of Chicago's famous "Loop." And you'll have no trouble getting to it from either O'Hare or Midway airports.

For more information, contact Lorenz Boehm, Conference Coordinator, (708) 635-2641.

NCTE ANNOUNCES NEW CONCEPT PAPERS SERIES

The National Council of Teachers of English has introduced a new series of professional publications for teachers, designed to present innovative thinking about English language arts education informally, in a quickly produced format. Concept Papers explore theoretical and practical issues in English literacy education at all teaching levels.

The first four titles in this occasional series are as follows:

Guidelines for Judging and Selecting Language Arts Textbooks: A Modest Proposal, by Timothy Shanahan and Lester Knight, for the NCTE Committee on Elementary Language Arts Textbooks. The paper addresses problems that arise when use of textbooks results in a standardized curriculum in the classroom. (Concept Paper No. 1, 1991: 49 pages. Stock No. 19700-0015.)

Doublespeak: A Brief History, Definition, and Bibliography, with a List of Award Winners, by Walker Gibson and William Lutz. Gibson and Lutz discuss the concept of doublespeak highlighted by the committee's annual Doublespeak Award and explain how to analyze, identify, and categorize doublespeak. (Concept Paper No. 2, 1991: 46 pages. Stock No. 12277-0015.)

Alternatives in Understanding and Educating Attention-Deficit Students: A Systems-Based Whole Language Perspective, by Constance Weaver. This paper explores Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children by reviewing various theoretical perspectives on its causes, assessments, and treatments. (Concept Paper No. 3, 1991: 48 pages. Stock No. 01291-0015.)

A Goodly Fellowship of Writers and Readers, by Richard Lloyd-Jones. A nationally known teacher of college writing comments on what is most important for helping writers in the formative stages develop not merely necessary skills but understandings about writing as a central human activity with significance beyond schooling. (Concept Paper No. 4, 1991: 46 pages. Stock No. 18585-0015.)

(NCTE Concept Papers, paperbound in 8½ x 11 format, are available from the National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801. Price: $6.95; NCTE members, $4.95.)

CALL FOR PROGRAM PROPOSALS

1992 CEL Conference
Louisville, Kentucky
November 18–19, 1992

LEADING CHANGE

How do the cries for reform shape the roles of the English/language arts leader? How can we *lead* the changes rather than *react* to them? As subject-matter specialists, how can we use our knowledge to direct reform efforts toward the best education for all students? The 1992 CEL Conference will address questions of change through keynote speakers and special-interest sessions. We encourage you to submit a proposal to lead a one-hour session.

Presentation Title _____

Will you need an overhead projector? _____

Audience: _____ Elementary _____ Middle School _____ High School _____ College _____ General

Presenters (First name indicates contact person)

1. Name _____

   Home address _____

   phone ( ) -

   School/Work Place name _____

   address _____

   phone ( ) -

   (Please star preferred mailing address)

2. Names of other presenters. Attach an additional sheet with complete mailing information if there are others presenting with you.

3. Chair _____

   Preferred address _____

Day you prefer to present (we will attempt to honor you request; however, no guarantees are made.) _____ Wed. _____ Thurs.

Type of session: _____ roundtable _____ debate _____ presentation

SESSION DESCRIPTION: Attach a concise description of your session, including objectives and possible outcomes.

Send the completed Program Proposal to:
Louann Reid, Conference Program Chair
Douglas County High School
2842 Front Street
Castle Rock, CO 80104

No proposals will be accepted by phone, but if you have questions you may call Louann at work (303) 688-3166 or home (303) 850-0386.

PROPOSALS MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 29, 1992. You will be notified of the committee's decisions in April.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Proposals need not be limited to the theme, although its use as a guideline is helpful to the planning committee.
2. Proposals should be imaginative and innovative, with clear objectives and methods of presentation. Titles, descriptions, and appropriate grade levels must accurately reflect the material to be presented. No changes in topic should be made after acceptance.
3. Proposals may be for (a) roundtable discussion, in which the leader encourages discussion from all participants; (b) debate, in which two or more leaders present opposite sides of an issue, possibly encouraging audience participation; or (c) small-group presentations, in which the leader presents information, allowing a period for questions at the end.
4. As a nonprofit organization, CEL cannot offer to presenters an honorarium or registration, meal, lodging or other expenses.
5. Please make copies of this form to share with others who would like to make presentations.
6. Individuals may be involved in more than one presentation.

CALLS FOR MANUSCRIPTS— PLANS FOR FUTURE ISSUES

The *English Leadership Quarterly*, a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary/secondary/college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are always encouraged.

Software reviews and book reviews related to the themes of the upcoming issues are welcomed. Inquiries about guest editorship of an issue are encouraged.

Recent surveys of our readers reveal these topics of interest: leadership training for the new department chair, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, the tracking/grouping controversy, problems of rural schools, the value of tenure, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

October 1992 (July 1 deadline):
Literacy: The Crisis Mentality

December 1992 (September 15 deadline):
Alternative Schools/ Alternative Programs

February 1993 (November 1 deadline):
Parent Involvement and Participation
Guest Editor: Lela DeToye (see special notice)

May 1993 (February 1 deadline):
Political Questions: Censorship, Standards, Certification, Proactive Lobbies, and Legislation

Manuscripts may be sent on 5.25- or 3.5-inch floppy disks, with IBM compatible ASCII files or as traditional double-spaced, typed copy. Address articles and inquiries to: James Strickland, Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly*, English Department, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, 16057–1326. (FAX: 412-738-2096)

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ENGLISH LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY

Conference on English Leadership

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May 1992
Editor: James Strickland

In This Issue

READING AND WRITING CONNECTIONS

by James Strickland, editor

The other day I read in the news that the yellow guidebooks to literary classics—*Cliffs Notes*—were now available on CD-ROM discs. (For those unfamiliar with the technology, a CD-ROM disc is the same as an audio compact disc—digitally encoded and read by a laser beam—except that it holds textual data instead of musical data.) What's incredible about the new *Cliffs Notes* on CD package is that you don't have to buy an individual *Last of the Mohicans* or *Red Badge of Courage*; with one disk you get all of *Cliffs Notes*—the whole shootin' match. The news that technology has answered the needs of the short-cut-seeking students of the nineties bothered me, but for reasons that I couldn't even articulate at first.

Initially, I was aggravated that the media would taint the incredible advance in library-storage capabilities offered by the CD-ROM discs by showing how it serves just another mundane commercial enterprise—pandering to those who would rather buy the plot summaries on laser disc instead of the classics of literature. But what really bothered me, more than the implication of technological crassness and the obvious elitism of the product line, was the fact that *Cliffs Notes* will probably enjoy a continued popularity into the twenty-first century. This means that despite all our efforts to the contrary, reading and writing are still being taught in such a way that students in this country find the *Cliffs Notes* approach beneficial. The implication is that their instructors are asking them to respond to their reading through written exams, research papers, and book reports, in such a way that they will profit from the "inside" information gleaned from *Cliffs*' summary of the characters, the plots, and sometimes the thoughts of the day's leading literary critics. This can only mean that teachers are still not asking students to respond to literature as real readers would respond. *Cliffs Notes* are valuable only when students are expected to know "the meaning that resides in the text" for regurgitation and display. *Cliffs Notes* are of no special help to real readers. Research has shown that students who write about what they read often use writing as a mode of thinking: they explore, question, connect, and respond. But first they must understand that this approach is valued—that it is okay to take risks and that their reactions to what they read have value. *Cliffs Notes*—on compact laser disc or in the familiar yellow package—are superfluous in a classroom where reading and writing connect.

One classroom where the connections are being made on a daily basis is documented by Driek Zirinsky, former editor of this *Quarterly*. Driek paints an action portrait of a master teacher at work as she builds a classroom community of readers and writers.

Mary Licklider, from Columbia, Missouri, describes a writing center that has become the heartbeat of their junior high school. The writing center is so successful that it has changed the way students, as well as faculty from disciplines other than English, view the reading and writing process.

"Rocky" Colavito, from the University of Arizona, echoes the question posed by Frank Smith: How can we get students to read like writers? Colavito suggests, in "Three Roads Converge in a

(continued on page 2)

Inside . . . **page number**

Building a Community of Readers and Writers: Portrait of a Teacher at Work 2
by Driek Zirinsky
WC: At the Heart of the Junior High 5
by Mary Licklider
Three Roads Converge in a Microchip: Reading, Writing, and Computer-Assisted Instruction 7
by J. "Rocky" Colavito
From Chaos to Competency: Weak Readers Learn to Write 8
by Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber
Using Reading- and Writing-to-Learn to Promote Revision 11
by John Wilson Swope
A Response Journal Makes the Reading/ Writing Connection 12
by Rebecca Laubach
An Introduction to the "Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts" . . 13
Calls for Manuscripts 15
Announcements 15

NCTE National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

Microchip," that new applications of personal computers in the writing classroom may encourage students to read like writers and write like readers.

Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber, from George Washington University, found that an important component of learning and academic success is a class culture that nourishes learning. Schreiber tells how she changed the group culture in her classroom and thereby changed her students' interest in the learning process. She sees the change as a move from chaos to competency.

John Wilson Swope, a whole language teacher from the University of Northern Iowa, encourages his students to use reading- and writing-to-learn strategies to see revision from the perspective of adjusting text to fit their intentions instead of simply addressing the conventions of standard edited English.

Rebecca Laubach, a classroom teacher at Mars Area High School in Pennsylvania, faces a difficult task teaching competence in reading and writing. Laubach shares how using response journals helps students develop their reading skills. Her article is titled, "A Response Journal Makes the Reading/Writing Connection."

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF READERS AND WRITERS: PORTRAIT OF A TEACHER AT WORK

by Driek Zirinsky
Boise State University

School districts and English departments may wish to connect reading and writing in the curriculum, but official curriculum guides of the school district or department—concise and linear—can only hint at the ways this might be accomplished. Those connections are made only in the day-to-day curriculum as it is structured by each teacher. In reality, the experiences that students are able to have in the classroom determine whether reading and writing connect for them.

Finding ways to connect reading and writing has been a special concern of English teachers for the past ten or fifteen years. At Nampa Senior High, where I have been an observer this year, the reasons for wanting to connect reading and writing can vary enormously from teacher to teacher. Some want to balance the time spent on reading and writing. Others connect them because they believe both to be parallel literate processes which reinforce each other. And as some teachers became concerned with the writing processes of their students, they saw a discrepancy between what they called "process writing" and the way they had been teaching literature.

To try to understand how one teacher connects reading and writing, I spent the year observing Shirley Rau as she built a community of thinkers, readers, and writers with her senior students. In late 1990, Shirley was named Idaho's Teacher of the Year, and in the spring of 1991 she was named one of four finalists for America's Teacher of the Year. These are well-deserved honors: she is a skilled English teacher. The connections this teacher makes between reading and writing are a reflection of her own theories about teaching English and, indeed, a close reflection of her own life as a reader and writer.

In Shirley's classroom, the fabric of community is woven together by the threads of reading and writing. I view Shirley's curriculum as an attempt to build a social and intellectual community that reads and writes together, one in which the common bonds come from shared experience over time. To accomplish this, she seems to hold several goals for her students: to build personal commitments to the class and its work, to develop personal habits of reading and writing, and to foster the development of thinking in the context of reading and writing.

The School Curriculum

Shirley's goals contrast in striking ways with the official curriculum's goals, which are heavily influenced by a different mindset about English curriculum. The official school curriculum, "Secondary Language Arts Curriculum Guide," begins by outlining the percentages of time to allot in the curriculum: writing and literature each receive 40 percent of time, oral language receives 15 percent, and reference skills receive 5 percent. The writing curriculum, described on one page, lists two main goals: "1. To foster independence in student writers. 2. To recognize quality in writing." The literature curriculum, described on two pages, states this philosophy:

> The secondary literature curriculum moves from a comprehension of the elements of literature to a growing awareness and appreciation of the literary tradition. The general focus for each grade level prescribes a scope and sequence but does not limit a teacher's options to supplement the core readings with works other than those outlined for each grade level. Literature should be integrated with writing.

The solitary goal for literature is: "Appreciate the value of world literary traditions." The rest of the page lists the drama, the novel, essays of criticism, and poetry and gives two or three objectives for teaching each of these genres. The following page in the guide lists the texts for the year: several novels and plays by title, a poem, and the anthologies *Sound and Sense* and *Adventures in English Literature*. Developed in 1988, the guide has slightly different literature selections for basic, regular, and advanced placement seniors. However, two years ago, the English department at Nampa Senior High agreed that tracking is detrimental to the students and, last year, eliminated tracking from the English classes in the school. Shirley's text choices reflect this change: her seniors read from the entire list without regard for classification as appropriate for basic, regular, or advanced placement classes. The official curriculum is now being substantially revised to reflect more closely current and emerging ideas about curriculum in the department.

Shirley, like all teachers, must translate the three pages of official senior English curriculum into day-to-day lessons for her students. Thinking, reading, and writing are the main events in her version of the senior curriculum of the school. One short imperative in the philosophy statement—integrate literature and writing—seems to be the guiding principle for her. Whatever the literary text or whatever the writing assignment, her focus is on the underlying thinking, reading, or writing strategies the students are developing, not upon the specific books to be read or the papers to be written.

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The Milieu

Nampa Senior High is crowded and large, with nearly the highest drop-out rate in the state: close to 25 percent of seniors dropped out last year. The 1,700 students in grades 10–12 occupy space designed for 1,100 students. Shirley's classes are large: 25 to 29 students each.

The school had been part of a conservative, traditionally rural community, but in recent years, it moved into the crosscurrents of change: growth in nearby Boise transformed it into a less expensive "bedroom" community, one more affordable than the closer suburbs. New residents are challenging the once dominant conservative influences on the school, those of the Northwest Nazarene College and Mormon communities. The growing political presence of a sizeable, long-time Hispanic community is also becoming a factor in the town.

Nampa Senior High is financially strapped. The school spends one of the smallest amounts per student in Idaho, a state ranking 48th in the U.S. in per-pupil spending. This, in brief, is the social context for the class Shirley tries to shape into a community, a group of students representing in microcosm the troubled, diverse community that forms the school boundaries.

Shirley's Curriculum

It is no easier for me to capture one teacher's curriculum in a few paragraphs than for a district to convey a curriculum plan in a few pages. With that caveat, let me give a snapshot of Shirley's curriculum. The materials of the class are easy to list: throughout the year she teaches six or seven novels from world literature (non-American authors), two plays, some poems, while students work on a series of writing assignments at the same time. As seniors, they are expected to develop a scrapbook, for which they write eight pieces of their own choosing. A response paper is developed for each work of literature. In addition, some other projects include a college and career unit, featuring student-developed resumes and sample application essays, and a senior project, encompassing a research component.

The students keep personal logs. Brief exploratory writing is assigned almost daily, for homework or in class. While they read, students are asked to note "interesting" or "important" ideas in the books, note the page numbers, and write down quotations. They are to write down questions they have as they read. Occasionally something more specific is assigned for the log—something "to think about." The logs are used in similar fashion for the senior projects or in developing ideas for the scrapbook writing. Log entries are the starting points for group and class discussions, and they form the backbone of the literature response papers. These and the scrapbook pieces are kept in writing portfolios. Evaluation is cumulative: each assignment is graded but may be revised. Final term grades are based on the portfolio as a whole and on the several "best works" students select from them for special attention.

These are the "whats," but in Shirley's classroom the "hows" seem more important. Reading and writing are woven into and from each other in a continuous pattern. Both occur virtually every day. Most days have a simple, predictable rhythm. Shirley says a few words about the day's activities, makes assignments, and answers questions. She often talks about "where we are going," placing the day's work in a larger temporal context. Her own goals for the day as a teacher are always on display for the students, and in stating them, she tries to build her students' awareness of the connections between reading and writing. While the focus one day may be on questions that the readers have about a text, or on themes another day, she reminds students that the purpose of their discussion is to help them read the next novel better; it will also help them with the response paper they have to draft by the end of the week. If the students are working on focus in writing, she reminds them that finding focus in reading is also something they have to work on. The kind of thinking that is useful to readers is presented as the thinking that is also useful to writers, revealing Shirley's own belief that reading and writing involve similar thought processes.

Structuring Class Time

Balancing the time spent on reading and writing seems important to Shirley, although frequently more in-class time is spent writing than reading. Writing or talking about reading is the class focus during the "literature" portion of the curriculum—consuming most of the official 40 percent of time the district curriculum expects. For the most part, reading itself takes place away from school.

Typically, Shirley teaches a short lesson using an overhead projector, and then assigns an individual task of a ten- or fifteen-minute duration. Then students meet for a specified reason in their small groups for fifteen minutes. Finally, the whole class reassembles for general discussion, building on what has transpired in the small groups. In the flow from whole class to individual to small group and back to whole class involvement, reading and writing are the warp and woof of the curriculum.

Community Building

Getting students committed to the work of the class is essential for Shirley. From the first day, the idea of community is conveyed through the physical setting and the expectations it communicates to students. The classroom, triangular in shape, is arranged with the tables pushed against two walls. On the third side, the tables mark a passage from the door into the working space. The triangle of tables outlines a space for the class. Chairs are backed against the tables that face the center. When the class is assembled they all sit—Shirley included—facing one another across the open space with no desks or tables separating them. This arrangement allows free movement of chairs into small working groups, or when private reading or writing time is needed, the students and Shirley can simply turn their chairs around and use the table tops which face away from the room. The turned backs of the students are a clear signal that work is in progress. There is space and place here to read and write, talk and listen in community.

The physical arrangement of the room isn't trivial. On the contrary, it signals what relationships are expected, as important an aspect of the curriculum as the texts the students read. It tells students that much is expected of them in this classroom. It says to students that everyone will be involved equally—there is no "back of the room." And while there is no place to hide, and thus less comfort for some, there is also the message that everyone is equal here; everyone is on the same level. Friends are all around for support, once each gets to know the other. Shirley often talks about supporting each other, about the risks each person takes in reading aloud or in sharing emerging ideas with the class. A student tells me that "we were scared to talk [in last year's class], but now we're in a community."

Shirley's relationship with the class reinforces the idea of community and is one way she conveys her high expectations. Shirley is known as a tough teacher; however, she is far from being a mean teacher. She stands near the door to speak to students as they arrive and leave, a small thing but a key to understanding the personal connection she makes with each of them. She is calm, low key, but intense. Classes start on time and on task. She leans

into the circle and speaks in a conversational voice. Not only is the decibel level low in her room, antagonisms seem to melt away. She is extraordinarily accepting of student work, of student ideas. The personal and teacher-student relationships Shirley creates reflect her long, successful experience as a coach: everyone in her class is a reader and writer, and she is the coach. The students are in her class to read and write, and to get better at it. They will share successes, commiserate in defeat, and help to teach each other. The climate, the quality of the relationships, is as much a part of Shirley's curriculum as the novels or the writing assignments.

Small Working Groups

The use of small work groups is a constant, daily feature of Shirley's classroom, reflecting her belief that learning occurs most meaningfully in a social context. To her, reading and writing become proficient in a shared context. Group work is used not merely to build comfort in the class; it is the best way, she theorizes, to develop reading and writing abilities. In teaching reading and writing, it is how students can learn from her, from each other, and from text.

Early in each semester Shirley assigns groups of four or five to be permanent writing groups. She tells the students that they are "families," and she encourages them to think about what that means. She describes the groups as "a safe place to try out new ideas."

In contrast, assignments into reading groups are made on the basis of reading progress. By working in two separate groups, one for reading and one for writing, Shirley feels that more students will come to know each other in the class. This is important for building participation in large-group meetings. Although many of the students have known each other for years, many other students are newcomers or outsiders. Still, most of the students know each other mainly as social beings; they seem not to know each others' ideas. To Shirley, essential participation rests on feeling comfortable. For teenagers, this means being comfortable with the people in the room and being willing to take a risk with "the big, uncomfortable ideas that are part of senior English."

Habits of Reading and Writing

One of Shirley's chief concerns seems to be helping her students to want to read and write once they leave school, although the official curriculum guide says nothing about this. Students track their reading rate and work to improve it. They are pushed to build habits of regular reading: "at least 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week" is her assignment. Each day in class a reading log is passed around. Each student has a page in the log for entering the date and the page each of them is on in the reading. During the year the students calculate their reading rates and look for increases in speed. A few days into a new book Shirley finds out where everyone is, and then she assigns readers to small groups with others who are roughly at the same place. She encourages the groups to set a target page to be at by the next day or week. She urges them to challenge each other to stick together. If they fall behind in reading, Shirley encourages them to catch up on the weekend. These groups become the working groups for reading.

In class, Shirley talks to students about their strategies for reading fiction and prose, and suggests others. Several times a year, the assigned book is a novel of choice. She works with students to identify writers, subjects, and styles they like, and allows the class to read them. She notes that in the first semester, personal-choice books were read far faster than those from the school list, such as *1984*; next semester, Shirley hopes to bring school and personal reading rates closer together.

Writing is promoted less as a lifetime habit, although journals and logs are mentioned as activities for a lifetime. Her own personal log, always on her lap, open and in use, models the use of a journal. She reads from her journal often, most commonly to sum up the class discussion from her notes, or to share something she has written about the novel they are all reading. When relevant, she talks about what she is reading, often reading a passage aloud. She shows how reading, and writing, can cast a new light on whatever a person is working on. Making connections, she tells and shows them, is what reading, writing, and thinking are all about.

Thinking Connects Reading and Writing

Shirley describes herself as "a process writing convert" for eight years; today she is less sure those ideas are comprehensive enough. She recalls hearing Ann Berthoff talk about necessary structures and disagreeing then. Today she is exploring what those structures might be for learning to read and write. She tends to see reading and writing as highly related, tied together, by the same underlying intellectual processes. She credits Linda Flower as a researcher who helped her see that reading helps writers.

Reading and writing are connected as literate processes in Shirley's teaching. She listens to student discussion, reads logs and papers, and tries to figure out what she calls "the gaps." What is going wrong in a student's thinking as revealed in her or his reading or writing? What can she do in the classroom to help them? She asks herself these questions all the time. The answers are the basis for her lesson plans. Of particular concern to Shirley is the issue of focus. Her seniors seem to have a hard time finding and sustaining a clear focus in their writing. What is most difficult in reading literature for the students, she believes, is finding the main thread—the theme—or focus in a work.

Because the small groups help to externalize otherwise hidden thinking processes, Shirley tends assiduously to building the group processes. Throughout the year—for instance, during the five minutes before giving a writing group assignment—she teaches mini-lessons on group skills like piggybacking ideas, listening and paraphrasing, and most importantly, asking and answering "the big" questions in their reading and writing. For example, after she has taught piggybacking, she will point out, a few days later, when the author of an essay is using "piggybacks on the idea of another author." She encourages students in the writing groups "to help each other build on their initial ideas." Although these are taught as group discussion skills, Shirley emphasizes that these skills are what thinkers, readers, and writers do. The kind of thinking that is needed to understand reading is presented as the thinking that is also useful to writers, and vice versa.

Conclusion

Connecting reading and writing can mean different things for each individual teacher. In Shirley Rau's case, connections are accomplished in sophisticated and complicated ways. She makes the processes of reading and writing central to her curriculum, not the texts or her assignments. Consistently, they are taught in a social context which she believes is central to learning them. She builds parallel temporal structures for reading and writing in her classroom. She pays attention to the underlying thinking processes they have in common. By referring students to these processes, she underscores what is important for her students to learn as thinkers, readers, and writers. She teaches students that reading and writing flow into and out of one another in a literate life.

WC: AT THE HEART OF THE JUNIOR HIGH

by Mary Licklider
Columbia, Missouri

That's "WC" for writing center. The kids still have not caught on to the reason that I always grin a little when I refer to the WC, but we do have plenty to smile about. Last year our WC staff had about 500 individual appointments, involving about 30 percent of our student body of 630 students, and roughly a thousand additional contact hours in classrooms. Not bad for a program that is only funded for three periods a day.

We knew, six years ago, when we presented the proposal for a writing center, that our school would be fertile ground for such a program. Our school of not quite six hundred students was small, and our faculty was close-knit—the kind of place where sharing lesson plans was common, not threatening. For six years, our district had already provided a popular, successful writing-in-the-content-areas program for secondary teachers. At the time of the proposal, many of the faculty members had already been through that program. We also had administrative support. Our principal told us that if we could get the funding, he would somehow find us suitable space in our already crowded building. The assistant superintendent to whom we presented our proposal had researched other writing centers and was interested to know how our program would be different. The board office found local funds for an additional six hours of English instruction, split among the three junior highs in our district.

Our writing center is also especially appropriate to middle-level students. The two goals of our WC—to provide individualized, ungraded writing instruction and to promote the schoolwide writing program—reinforce the goals found in our school's statement of philosophy:

> . . . The middle level curriculum not only attempts to **reinforce the basic skills** learned in elementary school, but also seeks to **enrich those and build new skills**. Exploratory classes, elective courses, and expanded opportunities for social interaction and leadership **enable students to take more responsibility** for their own actions. . . . **Cooperation among faculty members** within and across disciplines contributes to a positive and effective school climate in which students and staff are encouraged to **realize their potential**. Staff members also make conscious efforts to provide additional communication channels both within and outside of the classroom. . . . [emphasis added].

Those admittedly and rightly very broad goals allow us to adjust to changes in curricula and to the needs of the individual students and teachers that we serve each year. The constants are that our WC is an interdisciplinary program, not an English department program, and that the vast majority of our time and energy is spent tutoring students one on one. Caryn, an honors student, reported that the WC "made me think about what I was writing, and gave me a chance to express my own views. . . . That is just what the Writing Center is, a place to share your writing with someone one on one." Seventh grader Josh said that the WC is a place ". . . to work out what you want to say and help you put it on paper."

Maintaining Student Responsibility

We work most often on writing in progress, ranging from answers for comprehension questions to mystery stories, from science reports to contest submissions. Students ask for help in getting started, getting "unstuck" in the middle of a piece, revising, proofreading, learning to use a word processor, researching a topic, adjusting for a given audience. It is important at this level that this is an entirely voluntary program. The student decides whether or not to schedule an appointment and then whether or not to use the ideas discussed with the tutor. The WC teachers do not assign grades and are careful never to estimate grades. Ultimately, it is up to the student to decide when the writing is finished, when it is time to move from brainstorming to composing or back again. Therefore, our first questions to clients fall at the "evaluation" level of Bloom's taxonomy, eliciting the student's assessment rather than telling the student ours. We ask, "How do you like this piece?" "What do you think of it?" "Does anything bother you about it?" "What do you want us to work on?" The student reads the paper to us, maintaining control of the material. (I don't think I have ever read a student's paper in the WC.) We require our clients to make the decisions throughout the appointments. If we hit a lull in brainstorming, our question is, "Do you think you have enough ideas or should we do more?" When it is time to leave, we summarize appointments by showing the students what we write on the referral forms, and then we ask if they want to come back or continue on their own.

Such an approach maintains student ownership of and responsibility for the work, and it focuses attention on ideas first as opposed to focusing on spelling, punctuation, and penmanship. This is especially important at the junior high level, where students are just beginning to develop their own voices and identities. They need help clarifying their own voices, not someone to speak for them. Students, sensing the responsibility we give them, do not see the WC as an easy way out. One day, when no students accepted their teacher's offer to let them go to the WC during class to get help with their essays, she expressed her surprise to one of her students who had been a very regular WC client. His response was that he was not up to it that day: "She makes you think so hard, your head hurts." (High praise from a bright, talented student. I think of his comment when I'm having an off day.)

Other Services

While tutoring students is our most important task, we also offer a number of other services, performed for the most part outside the three hours for which we are funded. Although middle-level students need concrete reasons for writing—fame and cash fill the bill quite nicely—classroom teachers have a difficult time, at best, consistently providing an audience beyond the classroom. Thus, one of our other services is to seek broader audiences for our students' writing. We keep students and teachers informed of at least two dozen writing contests and opportunities for publication through announcements, memos, and the bulletin board. Teachers need only send us the names of interested students—we take it from there. We have made arrangements with a local radio station to broadcast one or two of our students live every Wednesday morning. Again, teachers need only send us names; we schedule appointments to polish the writing (sometimes this becomes wholesale revision) and make all the arrangements with the station. One "partner in education," a local hospital, has published student writing in its staff newsletter. They have also displayed copies of our literary magazine in their visitor areas. It's nice to hear complaints that these copies tend to "walk off." We coordinate publication of this annual magazine of about 140 pages. That might seems like a large book for a school of 630, yet we only print 10 to 15 percent of what is submitted. And we usually sell about 400 copies.

All this encouragement to try contests and publication serves our WC well. First and most obviously, it gets students writing, and writing with a commitment that students—especially middle-level students—do not always bring to assigned writing. Second, it tells students that we think they *can* produce winning writing;

we believe that they have something to say that is worth sharing and that they have the ability to do so. And finally, when we publicize our students' successes, we remind our parents, staff, and community that there are good things going on in education in this country after all.

Help with Word Processing

Our WC has also become a clearinghouse of sorts for information on the word processors used in our building. This happened more by chance than design, but whatever the reason, we have offered a great deal of writing instruction to students and teachers alike under the guise of word-processing instruction.

Another of our roles involves working with other teachers. The teachers' requests for help have been as varied as those of our student clients. Our success with the word processor as a tool in composition instruction has led other teachers to move some of their writing assignments from the classroom to the computer lab. The availability of an experienced teacher to be on hand in the lab has made first-time experiences using a word processor for composition less threatening for teachers and less frustrating for students. (With two teachers in the room, it takes half as long to get help.)

Writing in the Content Areas

Teachers have invited us to join them not only in the computer lab but also in their classrooms. We have taught composition lessons for content-area teachers and helped students with writing assignments in workshop-style settings. This kind of service has had a number of positive effects, two of which, I think, are worth mentioning. First, using writing to teach their own content takes the mystery away for teachers. The content teachers no longer seem to feel that only English teachers can teach writing, and they begin to see that they can do what we have modeled—and probably do it as well or better. For example, we developed writing assignments for three different math courses, assignments which preview new content, check understanding of processes, draw connections between concepts, and examine the purpose of learning specific concepts. When I asked this teacher if she wanted more assignments for the next units, she declined. She said she had seen enough models to do it herself. This confidence is probably the first big hurdle toward using writing to teach content.

Second, many junior high students (and their teachers) still have not realized what writing has to do with social studies or math or health. We spent two weeks this fall with a social studies teacher, developing and helping to teach a lesson on the legislative branch which resulted in an essay. Afterwards, that teacher also commented that he thought he could teach the lesson himself next year. He reported that the results of the test over that material were better than he had expected from those students. His students in turn noted that they felt they knew more about the government than they ever cared to know!

The writing assignments made by content-area teachers carry messages to students and teachers: that writing is not the specialized domain of a few, that it is an obvious "given" to view writing as an integral part of learning. Seeing the WC teachers literally working side by side with the various content-area teachers should certainly help illustrate, in a very concrete way for the students, the interdependence of the disciplines and the connection between good, clear prose and logical, clear thinking.

Sometimes our work with teachers is less obvious to students. On request, we help teachers develop or refine writing assignments to teach specified content, or lesson plans to lead students to a given product or objectives. A physical education teacher asked us to help develop a lesson around the assignment in a writing contest sponsored by the President's Council on Physical Fitness. The business teacher asked for help to rework her assignment for a review of current literature about computers. We spent about a week and a half with a reading teacher and her students developing and helping to teach a writing assignment on several elements of fiction. Like the students we tutor, the classroom teachers are in control. Our purpose is to help them with their own agendas—not to add to those agendas. There is all the difference between adding to teachers' workloads and doing some of it for them.

How We Get Clients

Given such a mutually supportive atmosphere, generating appointments has never been much of an issue. Even in our first year, we worked with students from sixteen different courses and, directly or indirectly, with thirty-two different teachers (about half our staff). To encourage appointments, we continue to follow two rules of thumb: remind them of who we are, and make the WC easy to use. We ask faculty members for copies of assignment sheets for our reference in the WC; keep track of when major writing assignments are scheduled; coordinate announcements to the students suggesting that they come to the WC for help; ask teachers for lists of students who might need help with a given assignment as well as lists of students whose work might have contest, broadcast, or publication potential; and publish lists and brochures detailing what we might be able to do for faculty members and students. Students sometimes come to the WC when teachers provide work time in class, but more often they come during their study hall periods. Students may refer themselves, or a teacher may suggest that a student come to see us. We make referral forms readily available to students and teachers on a counter in our main office. We communicate with teachers after appointments by giving a carbon of the completed referral form to the teacher who referred or whose assignment we worked on to let them know what we did (and did not) do.

We accept drop-in clients, although drop-ins who have not scheduled appointments ahead of time might not always accomplish as much as those who do. This is an important concession for junior high students, who are not known for planning ahead. I suspect it also keeps WC appointments from being a "big deal," something that would certainly detract from any program aimed at "cool" junior high students. Besides, drop-in appointments usually lead to follow-up appointments which *are* scheduled. We also accept quite a few appointments before and after school and during lunch with students whose schedules do not permit appointments during the hours the WC is formally open.

Why We Do It

Considering the range of services we offer and the extent to which students and teachers have availed themselves of those services, our WC program is clearly one of, if not the most, demanding and time-consuming preparations in the department. Despite this, those of us who staff it, love it. Students let their guards down in ways that they are often less willing to do with a teacher who must grade their work. As tutors, we get glimpses into how their minds work that, if we are paying attention, teach us to be better classroom teachers. Our work with other teachers deepens our respect for and confirms our faith in our colleagues. We see our work with other teachers creating bonds of understanding between departments. We are gratified, too, by the attitudes we see students forming about writing and about themselves as writers.

Shift of Attitudes

It would be impossible to sift out the contribution the WC has made to the improvement of students' actual writing skills. We do, however, credit our WC program with a shift in attitudes and a new acceptance of responsibility and revision. Since gifted students use the WC as often as average and remedial students, revision has come to be seen as an accepted part of producing writing rather than a punishment-after-the-fact that is reserved for the "dumb" kids

During the first three weeks of school last year, forty students entered a local essay contest. Even more began but failed to finish their entries. In other words, close to 10 percent of our student body chose to do formal, *unassigned* writing and were confident enough to think their work competitive. (It was, too. Our students won all the prizes!)

Such attitudes cannot help but carry over to writing outside the WC. Our strong writers learn to refine their skills and in some cases realize for the first time that those skills *can* be refined. Our weaker writers gain confidence and a sense of control. They all relish the uninterrupted one-on-one time with the teacher, maybe even more than we relish the uninterrupted time with *a* student. Tina, a ninth grader, confirmed this when she wrote, "The Writing Center is a cool place. . . . I enjoyed having the whole time with all the teacher's attention."

A program for junior high students that offers them a positive sense of control lays responsibility gently but squarely on their shoulders, and provides contact between them and a compassionate adult with nonetheless high expectations is obviously a program whose value extends well beyond scores on isolated papers: the relief of the chance to talk about the stresses that lead to papers on suicide, the pride of the "unlikely" writer whose reflections on drug abuse and teen pregnancy in her own family won a local contest, the new confidence born when the library finally becomes a familiar place, the catharsis of spelling out just exactly how mad (or disappointed or worried or happy) I am and why. Bit by bit, these individual successes build an atmosphere of confidence and success.

The Impact

The services our WC provides reach into the language arts classrooms and into the rest of the school to an extent that would not be possible otherwise, partly because the physical space provides a sort of focal point, but mainly because of the simultaneous centralization and diffusion of the time and effort it allows.

We use our time to encourage emerging identities and roles, acceptance of responsibility, pride in good work, and recognition of the connections between disciplines. Our program is very much at the center of what junior high school is all about.

THREE ROADS CONVERGE IN A MICROCHIP: READING, WRITING, AND COMPUTER-ASSISTED INSTRUCTION

by J. "Rocky" Colavito
University of Arizona

Distinctions between reading and writing have long since coalesced into mutually interdependent relationships identified as transactive and interactive; that is, "how reading and writing are interfaced [and] how reading and writing affect each other in terms of achievement" (Marilyn Sternglass. 1986. "Introduction." In *Convergences: Transactions in Reading and Writing*, edited by Bruce Petersen, 3. Urbana: NCTE). Indeed, whole texts have been written about this sense of convergence in the two processes, and a multitude of studies have focused themselves on either transaction or interaction and their varying effects on all phases of the composing process. In practice, however, many theorists and researchers have found that, in several instances, crucial points of learning *how* to write or read more effectively have been left out of the transactions or interactions between students and texts, students and students, or students and instructors. It seems as though bringing together reading—an internalizing activity that identifies, catalogues, and stores information from concrete media—and writing—one of the ways to create the concrete media that supply the bases for meaning for readers—has created a new set of questions regarding the processes involved in the interactions or transactions. One of the knottiest of these problems for composition theorists, researchers, and instructors is, how can we help students identify, internalize, and later implement the elements of effective writing that they encounter in their reading? Simply stated, the question is one asked by Frank Smith, how can we get students to read like writers ("Reading Like a Writer." In *Composing and Comprehending*, edited by Julie M. Jensen, 48. Urbana: NCTE).

While there has yet been no substantive research offering the most effective ways to bring about this sense of scaffolding for reading and writing, there may be a possibility that one answer may lie in the most recent boon to writing instruction, the personal computer. Existing research has already proven the computer to be an effective aid to composition teachers, whether used simply as a word processor or coupled with a specially designed composition instructional package. What follows, then, is an attempt to suggest some new applications for personal computers in the writing classroom, ones which may, after some modification, lead to a new emphasis on reading like a writer. Subsequently, the schema acquired through this new type of focused reading may lead to modified and improved writing processes.

Researchers and theorists in computer-assisted instruction (CAI) are almost unanimous in praising the personal computer's ability to produce more writing in test subjects. Much of this increased output can be credited to the "prompting" capabilities of many CAI programs, which can lift much of the burden of preparing evaluative handouts, lists of freewriting questions, or other sets of queries from the teacher. What these prompting programs do is simply facilitate student-text interaction via a series of questions or tasks that help students move through different parts of the composing process. Since students cannot get very far without completing the questions or tasks, they become accustomed to examining their texts closely in the early stages of production. One such program, WANDAH (Writer's Aide and Author's Helper), now marketed as HBJ-WRITER by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, uses prompts all through the composing process to assist students. For example, prewriting activities include a step called "nutshelling," which asks users to list their audience, a tentative purpose for writing, and a preliminary summary of their essay-to-be. WANDAH also stresses revising, and this is where the program shines for instructors attempting to emphasize the process of reading like a writer. Indeed, WANDAH goes far beyond simple features like spell checkers to include a punctuation checker, a list of "problem" words (e.g., "its" and "it's") that students often confuse, and even a system that actually prompts the student to approach revision from a viewpoint of reseeing the text for what it really is and thinking where it should actually go, as advocated by Donald Murray (1985. *A Writer Teaches Writing*. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin). This system,

aptly called a "reviewing aid," includes an outliner, which does just what you'd expect—it outlines the essay as it stands, allowing students to see the progression of ideas and encouraging them to search out flaws in their logic. WANDAH also helps students with style, like WRITER'S WORKBENCH, developed by Bell Labs and marketed by AT&T, although the analyses are limited to rough surface features such as sentence length, abstractness, or wordiness.

Of course, WANDAH and other CAI packages are not necessarily replacements for actual instruction; they can be supplemented or supplanted by teacher-prepared files that the students can read before undertaking prewriting, drafting, or revising. In fact, teacher-induced interactions have been found preferable in specialized writing contexts, particularly literary analysis as suggested by John Evans in "Teaching Literature Using Word Processing" (1985. In *Writing on Line: Using Computers in the Teaching of Writing*, edited by James L. Collins and Elizabeth A. Sommers. Boynton/Cook). Whether these files contain a detailed series of questions about a text, or a task involving comparisons of paragraphs, or even an exercise in simple proofreading, they all serve the same purpose as a programmed CAI package; that is, they help the students become more aware of the cognitive processes that are engaged throughout the writing process.

By emphasizing the importance of reading and rereading in the writing process, the personal computer becomes a meristem of sorts for both processes, since the students must read a variety of materials—prompts, questions, portions of drafts, computer-generated text analyses, and so forth—centered around their own writing—both process and product.

While the bulk of research has centered upon the computer's effects on individual students and their writing development, it must also be pointed out that word processing and CAI can also foster a greater sense of transaction/interaction between individuals and peer groups. Group work can often begin early in the semester by pairing students who are proficient typists or word processors with less experienced or apprehensive classmates, as suggested by Linda Bickel in "Word Processing and the Integration of Reading and Writing Instruction" (1985. In *Writing on Line: Using Computers in the Teaching of Writing*, edited by James L. Collins and Elizabeth A. Sommers. Boynton/Cook). As the semester progresses, and individual writing patterns and abilities have been charted, the mixing and matching can continue to take place between writers, yielding increased collaboration on written texts. This sense of collaboration can be accomplished in any number of ways; the most obvious arrangement is having the students work side-by-side at the terminal, an arrangement often effective in introducing students to the tutorials that accompany word processing and CAI packages. Another way to encourage interaction between students is to share files, either by copying individual files onto "class disks," kept available for individual examination, or by having students exchange their files on their individual disks. In this way, students can read portions of each other's drafts individually or in pairs at the computer monitor, and then they can enter evaluations or suggestions into a separate file for their partner to read. A more complex method of encouraging peer interaction is to use a networking configuration, where each student's computer is linked to a central "master" computer that acts as a file server. Instead of placing data on an individual class disk, all the input from a group of students is entered into the file server's hard disk (which can be thought of as an internal disk that holds millions of times more data than a floppy disk). Instead of working with class disks, the file server can distribute the files to each student's computer on the network, so students at individual terminals can, in effect, work in larger groups on the same project at the same time.

Once again, as students are reading and commenting upon the work of their peers, the reading and writing connection through peer interaction is fairly obvious. By pairing proficient writers with less experienced classmates, the "collaboration component" promotes exchange of writing strategies and techniques. Word processing/CAI packages that allow the students to "split in half" what is viewed on the monitor can make collaboration even easier by allowing students to keep the original file unchanged in one half of the screen while they experiment with a revised version in the other. Split-screen capabilities can also incorporate modeling—students can look at models of effective writing and then practice by imitating them, a technique used to reinforce devices such as arrangements of arguments, documentation, or variety in sentence length, all elements of effective writing that students might not otherwise pick up through cursory reading.

Even the instructor need not be left out of all the fun that computer-assisted composition fosters. Teacher-student interaction can be promoted in any number of ways, many of which branch off from the techniques used to increase peer interaction. As noted already, teachers can write exercise files that students use to begin prewriting, evaluate rough drafts, or guide their revision. Teachers can hold conferences with students at the terminals, and split-screen capabilities allow the instructor to model revisions for students using one half of the screen while reading through their drafts on the other half of the screen. For example, an instructor might find a paragraph that contains an assortment of ideas with no central idea to guide it. The instructor could list the different ideas for the student on a split screen, suggest an alternative pattern, and then let the student work on similar problems using the first example as a guide. The latter technique not only incorporates modeling, but it also uses that modeling to a productive end—directing the students to reread their drafts to locate specific problems and correct them. More importantly, it models a teacher's evaluative process for the students by showing them that when instructors read their work, they are looking for specific patterns or criteria of effective writing and that their whole purpose in evaluating writing is to identify these traits for the students, illustrate where students missed opportunities to use these techniques, and then encourage them to use them in their own writing.

The personal computer, whether buttressed by a CAI package or simply used as a word processor, cannot be overlooked as a focal point in the integration of reading and writing in the composition classroom. Its usefulness as a means of encouraging writing at all points in the composing process is rooted in three qualities. First, the personal computer can help model and encourage a wide variety of prewriting/planning strategies for the students; second, it can help students become more aware of syntactic, stylistic, organizational, and mechanical conventions of effective writing by collaboration, prompting, or checking programs; finally, the personal computer can model and reinforce a variety of strategies for reviewing and revising texts in much the same manner.

FROM CHAOS TO COMPETENCY: WEAK READERS LEARN TO WRITE

by Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber
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Every class has its own culture, and as teachers, we should be intentional about the learning cultures we help to create. I explored

the notion of creating a class culture while teaching English at a small private high school and succeeded in turning around a group of students others might characterize as "non-learners."

During the first week of school, while I was still unfamiliar with my new students' writing abilities, I assigned an essay on the required summer reading. My assignment asked the students to describe a character, showing his/her importance in the novel, conveying the nature and personality of the character, and telling why the author would present such a character. Though I did not know whether the essays would be one paragraph or two pages, I did expect a grade-level difference between classes; that is, the tenth graders would show a degree of maturity or development in their writing above that of the ninth graders. Unfortunately, my expectations were wrong: my ninth graders wrote essays displaying good organization, development, and sentencing skills, while my tenth graders produced papers with weak thesis development and poor sentences. The source of this disparity was troubling: the school was parochial in nature and class size was not a factor because both classes contained fewer than twenty students. The principal told me that the ninth graders were brighter than the tenth graders, but it was not clear to me how higher test scores translated into better essays

Writing samples from student papers in each grade illustrate the discrepancies in writing ability: The first answer is representative of the ninth-grade class:

> "Now, I don't like school" begins *The Pigman,* by Paul Zindel. The former statement was written by John Wandermeyer, sophomore and coauthor of this story. He follows it with, "But then again, most of the time I hate everything." At this point, two things become clear about John. Firstly, he is self-centered, assuming that his feelings were at the center of all the happenings in the story. Secondly, he exaggerates.

Sample #1 succeeds on many levels. The choice of quotations reveals character through dialogue. Moreover, the comments on the character's statements here and throughout the paper are illuminating. Finally, the use of transitional phrases to connect sentences ("At this point," "Firstly," and "Secondly") gives the writing a level of sophistication and order. The remainder of the paper describes John's actions in the story and how he affects other people and the novel's outcome.

The second example is representative of the tenth-grade class:

> Deborah Bronski was a beautiful woman who lived in Poland during the Holocaust. Deborah, a Jew, married an irreligious Jew named Paul Bronski. They had two children, Rachel and Stephan. One flaw in Deborah's near perfect life, was an ongoing affair with a journalist, Christopher De Monti.

In contrast to the first essay, Sample #2 is weak in several ways. The description in the opening paragraph reads like plot summary, as does much of the remainder of the essay. No title or author (*Mila 18* by Leon Uris) is given, and the student omits any thesis as to the character's importance or author's purpose for creating this character. The second half of the paper focuses on Paul, not Deborah, and thus fails to illuminate the reader. Only in the conclusion does the reader get a hint of a theme when the student describes Deborah's story as a coming of age. Without elaboration, the essay's message remains underdeveloped.

These samples are quite typical of the ninth-grade and tenth-grade writing. Clearly, the tenth graders needed to master thesis presentation and idea development. Sentence problems might disappear as their command of organizational problems improved.

After a semester of studying the differences, I saw the problem as two-fold: (1) the ninth graders were readers, unlike the older students; and (2) the ninth graders as a group valued learning and academic success, while the tenth graders lacked a class culture that nourished learning. The reading factor accounted for better test scores and was a skill that could not be changed overnight. However, the second element, the group culture in the classroom, was something that could be altered. I felt that working collaboratively on the stages and process of writing in small peer groups would help my students' writing, but in order to create a new learning culture, I had to interest my students in the learning process.

The following discussion details how I changed the class culture and pedagogy to produce better writers.

Class Culture

Changing the class attitude about learning would be my most difficult task. These tenth-grade students had had six English teachers over the course of two years and were fairly uncontrollable. When I asked why their teachers had chosen to leave, students told me that the teachers had been nice but that the students had "walked all over them" and discipline was next to impossible. The students were manipulative, used to having their own way, and used to making all of the rules. Traffic to and from the bathroom was common during class. Private conversations about cars, rock concerts, sports, and cosmetics were prevalent. Students would mock my lesson plans and refuse to do their in-class worksheets, homework, and long-term assignments. They were "whiners," complainers who wore down the opposition, whether it was their parents or their teachers. "We can't read the short story; it's too hard. We're not the college students you're used to—you expect too much." Establishing inflexible ground rules was my first step in changing students' attitudes.

Becoming a drill sergeant was not easy for me; in fact, I hated the role. But I knew that I had no choice. In-class discipline was crucial. I put the following rules into effect, and they were non-negotiable:

1. Students will receive an "F" every time they
   - disrupt the class,
   - complain in class,
   - gossip in class, or
   - come unprepared for class;
2. Students will not be excused to use the washroom during my class;
3. Disruptive students will be sent to the principal after the third reprimand of the day; and
4. Quizzes on homework assignments will count heavily in the grading process.

In the beginning, the students thought the rules were funny and joked about accumulating "F's." There was much bravado in claiming to have more failures than anyone else. Students also seemed to enjoy being sent from the room because this made them the center of attention. However, as their parents became aware of their constant visits with the principal, the students started to complain. I stood fast by my rules. Some of the students could not control their behavior and were constantly removed from class. Parents became concerned because students were responsible for work they missed while not in class. They accused me of being unduly harsh and of not liking certain students.

Nevertheless, my rules remained in force. The full impact of the message hit home when report cards reflected the average of academic grades with those for behavior. Parents grounded students and took away driving privileges. Students accused me of ruining their lives and did not hesitate to use profanity or sexist

language in telling me so. However, the rules remained unchanged. Temper tantrums simply resulted in a visit to the principal's office.

By the middle of the third marking period, all but two students wanted desperately to change the class culture in order to restore their social lives. The majority were quiet, obedient, and respectful of me and others. They got angry with the two remaining disruptive students and constantly told them to be quiet or asked me to change their seats. When they worked in pairs, they avoided their friends so that they would not be tempted to gossip and looked for someone with whom they could finish the work of the day. Consequently, something wonderful happened. They began to talk critically to each other about the assignments, their ideas, and their writing strategies. Students would madly search for "good" quotes to use in their papers and would savor the novels as they shared parts they particularly liked or asked about parts they did not understand. Students realized that their grades improved not only with better discipline but with more attention to the assignments. Mastering the subject and learning itself were becoming important and self-gratifying.

Once my students were "with me," they looked forward to learning how to improve. What I had to say in class mattered and no one wanted to "miss" anything that might be pertinent to their next assignment. Their rough drafts improved, and they craved input before the final drafts were due. Clearly, they now valued the learning process and were transferring skills from one paper to the next, building a writing competency.

Pedagogy

Two aspects of my teaching method had to change in order to reach these students. Because they were weak readers, the older students were not as skilled at following written instructions as the ninth graders, who could read and follow written directions without misunderstanding them. Therefore, I needed to back up written assignments with extensive oral explanation. In addition, these tenth-grade students had difficulty incorporating any written feedback on papers into their next assignments, while the younger students could understand written comments and utilize constructive criticism. Consequently, I continued with extensive written comments but elaborated upon them when I returned the papers.

One-on-one conferences became the primary mode of delivering useful information. Working with me individually, the students could ask questions, clarify points, and get meaningful feedback. Students gained a more thorough understanding of what I meant by such elements as transitions, elaboration, and proper use of examples. I could encourage students in a personal way by referring to their goals for the last paper and why they had succeeded or failed to reach them. Although I was initially concerned about how time-consuming this approach was, the results proved it was effective. Once students had learned to clarify goals, we moved from one-on-one conferences to small groups, where students could work with each other to achieve success. Students began to value peer feedback on assignments and to teach and learn from each other.

During the writing conferences, I found vagueness or lack of development was a common problem for tenth graders. When students would make a statement, I would simply say, "For example?" And so we honed in on specificity. By eliciting specific examples during our private conferences, students were better able to think of other examples on their own. Once students came up with examples, many would write about an incident or use a quote but fail to bring home the point to the reader. I would have the students tell me in simple terms why they used an example, and I would suggest that they write it down to make the point in their essays.

Learning to focus or zero in by talking, in addition to writing (outlining, brainstorming, clustering), produced clearer thesis presentation and elaboration. This exercise helped particularly with thesis development when what they wanted to say and what was coming out on paper were quite different.

Just as with vagueness and thesis development, transitions presented a conceptual problem. Even armed with a list of specific transitional words or phrases—indicating addition, contrast, example, or conclusion—students either did not use or misused transitions. Students only began to grasp the concept by reading aloud each sentence and hearing the missed connection. Asking students to tell me why they put two ideas together, what their associations were, and why a sequence which was logical to them enabled the students to express themselves orally and therefore prepare for the written mode.

I have thought about what I would do with classes of more than twenty students, where the one-on-one conference might become a logistical problem. One possibility is working in groups of two or three, using student papers for illustration on a rotating basis. Another possibility would be to pick out one transitional problem in each paper, to work on transitions, and then to do the same for other common problems. Once the students become motivated to improve their writing, the work in small groups will help them. At the least, I would plan to hold one individual conference each marking period in order to provide personal attention, and it might be possible to hold these sessions while the other students use class time for brainstorming or drafting.

Conclusion

Many of my essay assignments ask students to discuss an author's theme, message, or purpose. The following example is part of a paper on Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,* written later in the year by a tenth grader:

> *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,* by Maya Angelou, is an autobiography about her life as she grows up. She is a black girl living in an all-black neighborhood, in a small southern town called Stamps. She discusses throughout the book the theme of how hard it is to be black. The following are some examples that represent this theme.

While the sentences may not be varied, the focus and purpose are clear. The remainder of the paper uses quotes and incidents to illustrate examples of prejudice. The writer's points are made with commentary such as: "This scene proves how even though Momma and Maya were richer than the poor white children, the children still made fun of them just because they are black. Maya was very proud of her grandmother for standing up to them." Every example brings home a point. The conclusion summarizes the theme: "Maya Angelou had to live with bigotry throughout her life. Being black is not very easy and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* teaches us that in a very unique way." This paper is better than previous ones, not only because the reader is able to grasp the points made, but also because the writer has said what was intended.

When students received subsequent report cards, they rejoiced over their progress. Even though privileges at home had been restored, students continued to work enthusiastically with me on each project. They now valued academic achievement and wanted to reach higher personal success. Along with improvement in their expression came an expansion of their thinking. Improved thesis development showed me that they were becoming critical thinkers.

While the command of sentence structure, vocabulary, and style can only be developed over time, the mastery of organization, development, and transitions is possible in a shorter time frame. These tools to facilitate clear expression and broader thinking are accessible through written instructions reinforced by one-on-one conferences and small-group work. Peer groups foster a trust and a sharing of language that encourages expression and the desire to continue the learning process outside of class, as Ginger McManus and Dan Kirby point out in their March 1988 article "Effective Use of Peer Groups to Teach Writing" (*English Journal*: 78–79). Both students and teachers benefit by creating a writing culture with specific goals and achievable success.

USING READING- AND WRITING-TO-LEARN TO PROMOTE REVISION

by John Wilson Swope
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Teaching students to revise is not a single day's mini-lesson. Knowing or sensing that a problem exists is not enough to help the writer revise the text, as Linda Flower and her colleagues point out (1986. "Detection, Diagnosis, and the Strategies of Revision." *College Composition and Communication* 37: 16–55). Instead of merely "detecting" a problem, writers need to be able to "diagnose" the problem. Because the potential problems with any text vary, learning to identify problems as specifically as possible will help students to resolve them. As Flower and others point out, "Diagnosis constitutes a particularly powerful form of problem representation. As an act of concept recognition, it draws on prior knowledge to identify and define problems in a way that points to revision" (p. 40).

Most high school and beginning college students that I have worked with over the past ten years tend to revise their writing in much the same way as the inexperienced writers studied in the research of Nancy Sommers (1978. "Revision in the Composing Processes of College Freshmen and Experienced Adult Writers." Diss. Boston University) and Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte (1981. "Analyzing Revision." *College Composition and Communication* 32: 400–14). My students seem to make changes out of a sense of correcting their prose rather than being concerned, as more experienced writers are, with making the overall meaning communicate with a specific audience.

To encourage my students to view revising from the perspective of adjusting the text to fit their intentions rather than simply addressing conventions, I have developed a strategy that uses reading- and writing-to-learn to promote revision.

The Revision Strategy Handout

After completing a draft of their writing, my students complete a revision exercise by following the directions given in a handout. Specifically, they are asked to:

1. State the focus of purpose for your essay. What new understanding about the subject (insight) do you wish to give to the reader?
2. Reread your essay twice and map it. During your first reading, note a key word or phrase in the left margin that summarizes the central idea for each paragraph. During your second reading, note the supporting details or devices for each paragraph in the right margin.
3. Look at the sequence of ideas in the left margin. How does this sequence help to achieve your focus? How could you rearrange your ideas to help your reader better understand your focus?
4. Look at the list of details in the right margin. Have you used specific details that share experiences and ideas with the reader or are you telling the reader about them? Where do you need to add details to support each key idea?
5. Identify the changes that will strengthen your essay. Make the changes that will sharpen the focus and support your ideas.

This strategy helps students to identify problems with the text and begin to develop solutions to solve them, incorporating the theoretical perspective of Ellen Nold (1982. "Revising: Intentions and Conventions." In *Revising New Essays for Teachers of Writing*, edited by Ronald A. Sudol, 13–23. Urbana, IL: NCTE) and adapting the practical strategies of George Thompson (1978. "Revision." *College Composition and Communication* 29: 200–2). As a reading-to-learn strategy, the first direction requires the students to state what they wish the whole piece of writing to accomplish, to express what Nold refers to as their intentions. After a student writes a purpose statement, the statement becomes a fixed point of reference. It indicates the student's purpose for reading the text and a means of identifying the main idea of the text.

In the second direction, I ask the student to map the piece of writing and make marginal notes. The first rereading helps the student to determine the overall structure of the piece of writing while the second helps the writer to examine the supporting detail. On a paragraph level, these two readings direct the student to identify the main ideas and points of support as the student identifies the focus of each paragraph in the left margin and then returns to list the supporting points on the right.

When the student returns to examine the marginal notes in the third and fourth directive, the writer is reading a much simpler text. As a result, the student can evaluate it more easily. Looking only at what has been written in the margins, the writer can determine at a glance whether the purpose has been maintained and decide whether the existing sequence of ideas is logical for a reader. The marginal notes also permit the writer to compare the supporting points in the right margin with the main points in the left margin. These marginal notes also permit the writer to see the repeated ideas and motifs that may enhance the overall coherence of the piece. Reading the marginal notes, the student momentarily ignores the text in the middle of the page and avoids getting drawn into prematurely correcting surface features. Instead, the student focuses upon intentions: evaluating and modifying overall structure, content, and means of support.

The advantages of this reading- and writing-to-learn strategy are that students know what they are looking for while they are reading their texts. When they find that the text does not match their intentions, they have identified a problem with the text. Students are then able to articulate the problem in writing before looking for means to solve it. As Flower and others phrase it, "diagnosis . . . points to revision."

Although I use this revision strategy throughout the semester, one of my favorite applications of it is to have composition students use it as a final writing assignment in the semester to revise their own diagnostic essays, written during the first class of the composition course. I deliberately wait until the end of the semester to return these writing samples to the students. Often, the students' first reactions are of disgust with the quality of the writing they produced in that less-than-ideal writing situation. However, through the application of the revision strategy, the students move quickly beyond their disgust to identifying what

keeps the piece of writing from working and making adjustments to it. The typical result of this combination of reading- and writing-to-learn revision strategy is an essay with a clearer focus, coherent structure, and specific means of support.

When students use both reading-to-learn and writing-to-learn as a part of their revising procedures, they can begin to move away from the simple detection that problems exist within their writing to diagnosing specific problems. At that point, they can begin to find solutions to resolve the problems through revision.

A RESPONSE JOURNAL MAKES THE READING/WRITING CONNECTION

by Rebecca Laubach
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Basic English 11 is a class reserved for three-time English "losers," young men and women who did not successfully pass the Pennsylvania Tells Test for English and Reading competency in eighth grade, and who were unable to complete the standard reading and English courses in both ninth and tenth grades. Every morning at 9:37 a.m., eighteen of these students filter quietly into my classroom, where my job, as dictated by the approved course of study, is to help them develop minimum competence in reading and writing (survival skills, if you will). My personal goal is to ensure that they achieve some measure of success in an English classroom—something that has never happened before for most of them.

When I was choosing a strategy to help them develop their reading skills, I tried to consider their "special" nature—understanding that with these students, their egos are fragile, their self-confidence is almost nonexistent, and their bravado is a means of survival.

Remembering that students with self-confidence problems fear public humiliation more than private failure, I sought a "private" activity, one that could go on between each student and me, with no chance of anyone seeing me give "special" help. To this end, I decided to try response journals. My thinking was that having my students respond in writing to our classroom reading would help them develop their reading skills to some degree, a belief founded on research showing us that because reading and writing share common essential skills, paying attention to both reading and writing will affect the thinking processes that inform each. In fact, as I discussed reading strategies with my colleagues, I found that many were already using some form of the response journal with their lower-level students, confirming the notion that the writing-to-understand-reading concept has a "significant impact" upon the way we teach reading (Robert Tierney. 1990. "Redefining Reading Comprehension." *Educational Leadership* 48 (6): 37–41).

Once I had chosen the response journal as my reading strategy, I felt my method of implementation was critical. I suspected that if I forced the journals on my students, they would respond with suspicion and hostility, and the journal writing would lose its potential, positive benefit. My suspicions were supported by a recent study which reported that reading and writing are "very personal behaviors [and are] enhanced when the student retains ownership of the activities that develop language, rather than when [the activities are] imposed by the teacher" (Roger Farr et al. 1990. "Writing in Response to Reading." *Educational Leadership* 48 (6): 66–69). Thus, I had to find a way to make my students "choose" to keep a response journal. The most effective way of doing this, I felt, would be to make the response journals an alternative to their regular course work. To "suggest" the response journal to my students, I simply attached a photocopy of the following letter to the one-page overview which I always give each student, an overview providing a day-by-day breakdown of the activities and assignments for the entire unit:

> Students,
>
> As an alternative to the formal writing assignments in this unit (each unit overview includes two or more formal writing assignments which draw upon the literature read throughout the unit), you may keep a response journal. That is a notebook where you tell me, in writing, your opinion of the stories we read. You write me notes—like this one. I will write back to you—in your journal.
>
> When you keep a journal, there are no right or wrong "answers." You are telling me your thoughts and ideas, so whatever you write will be, in a sense, "correct" . . .

The letter went on to give the specific requirements for the response journal and concluded, "I hope that you will try the journal—your opinions are important to me and I'd like to read them. . ." In truth, I was as curious to read the journals as I was convinced that they would be beneficial. Studies of reading comprehension point out that reading is an intensely private and individualized activity. A "reader's journey through text is likely to be full of images, tension, anticipations, reactions . . . satisfactions and reflections," suggests Robert J. Tierney, a noted researcher in the field of reading (p. 41). I wanted to be let in on these emotions; I wanted to see how my students responded to the material that I presented and, perhaps, to alter my method of presentation based on their reactions.

So, the journal writing began. At first my students were skeptical. "Anything we say is really okay?" was a common question, as were requests for repeated affirmations that I would not "take off" for grammar and spelling errors. Once my students were convinced that I really meant what I said about grading, they became consumed with worries about format. Questions about where to put the date and how wide the margins should be came at a furious rate. I spent the entire first day's journal writing time convincing my class that the intent of this project was to enhance reading comprehension, not to trick them into making writing errors. However, the journal writing went surprisingly well once we got past the technicalities. Every one of my students wrote every day, and each reacted to the reading in highly individualized ways.

Sometimes the reactions were predictably consistent with the personalities of my students. I knew Lauren, a student I had had for two years, saw everything in terms of right and wrong and that she would not risk new endeavors if there was a chance that she would not be perfect at them. Thus, I was not surprised when she avoided risks and confined her entire journal to summaries of the stories and poems we had read. Even though she took no creative risks, Lauren's journal allowed me to see exactly how well she was following the material.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from Lauren and her literal interpretations was Audrey, whose journals rarely had anything to do with classroom reading. Audrey, who came from an almost incomprehensibly troubled home life, spent most of her journal time writing about why she could not concentrate on school work. Although I doubt journal writing had any positive effect on Audrey's reading skills, I am confident that she was able to relieve some anxiety at least and, as she said, "to sort out [her] thoughts so [she could] think."

Most of my students, however, fell somewhere between the two extremes. Many used their journals to develop prediction skills. After reading the first half of a story one day, they would try to guess, or predict, how the story might be resolved the next. Since prediction is an invaluable part of reading comprehension, I was pleased to see my students' predictions becoming more accurate and more sophisticated as the journal keeping progressed. For example, halfway through the reading of Washington Irving's "The Devil and Tom Walker"—our first story— Peter, a very reserved yet hard-working student, wrote, "I bet in the end, he is sorry he dealt with the devil." It was a somewhat obvious prediction, but nonetheless it was a beginning. At the same point in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," just one week later, Peter commented, "The way to the studio is dark and twisted, I bet he [Roderick] is too." And later, "Roderick is falling apart just like his house . . . like they are the same and if one dies so will the other." This set of predictions exemplified the type of thought development many of my students had. I felt it was quite significant, and that this development, in itself, was sufficient justification to call the journals a success.

Prediction was not the only reading skill my students acquired. Many also began to display a degree of analytical thinking I had not thought them capable of. For example, Ted wrote in his first journal entry, "This story was stupid. I hate to read and I hate this class. Oh, I hate writing too." Much later, when commenting on a particularly wordy and slow-moving passage from James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie,* Ted wrote, "This didn't have enough action for me, but it was cool how he showed the Indians treating a paleface so good (*sic*) . . . They [the Indians] had respect for him [the paleface] even though he was old and dying . . . We should be like them." Ted then went on to write about his grandfather and about the lack of respect he felt the community-at-large gave to the elderly. He concluded with, "Maybe my family will be like the Indians were if Grandad dies. I hope so." This is a remarkable leap from ". . . I hate to write too," and I feel it shows a real development in Ted's analytical skills.

When the journal unit ended, my students asked to be allowed to continue writing journals instead of formal compositions. Although I would have loved to acquiesce to their request, I felt I could not because composition writing is a skill they need to develop as well. Still, I could not deny the success of the response journal and its obvious benefit to my students' reading development. Thus, I shared my concerns and asked my students to help with these decisions, letting them share control of their reading and writing. My students and I are currently working on a compromise plan whereby they alternate between formal compositions and response journals with each successive literary unit. We are also negotiating a "reading for pleasure" unit in which the students are free to choose any book they wish to read and respond to in class each day. Additionally, we are trying to establish some class guidelines for what does and does not constitute a "good" journal entry.

Giving students a sense of empowerment is one way to develop a life-long enjoyment of reading. And though I do not know that I would claim these students have a "love" of reading, I know they seem to approach reading with less hostility than they did before. So, would I use reading response journals again? The answer is an unequivocal, "yes." I plan to incorporate the journal into all of my Basic English classes. I feel that no matter how successful the reading response journal is in helping my students develop or enhance their reading skills, it is one way I can assure them some measure of success in an English classroom, and that, to me, makes the journal a valid and valuable teaching tool.

An Introduction to the "Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts": from the Committee on Teacher Preparation and Certification, NCTE

INTRODUCTION

This introduction provides a brief summary of the 1986 *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts.* It does not replace the 1986 *Guidelines,* and readers are encouraged to use the full document when planning teacher education programs, seeking accreditation, or evaluating teacher education curriculum.

The 1986 Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts seeks to define what should be expected in preparing teachers to teach English language arts, and in doing so, reaffirms the view of English presented in the earlier *Statement on the Preparation of Teachers of English and the Language Arts (1976),* and clearly supported at the English Coalition Conference 1987, that language is central to learning and since all language processes are integrated, language study should be approached holistically.

The 1986 Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts states that the goal of preservice education is to initiate and develop certain knowledge, pedagogical abilities, and attitudes which will be the foundation for the teacher's subsequent career, a career in which the teacher is a scholar, a decision maker, and an agent of curriculum change. However, in discussing preservice education the document does not prescribe how that goal might be attained.

The audience for this document is broad: administrators, curriculum planners, members of the state department of education, those responsible for the accreditation of institutions which prepare teachers, those who plan inservice programs and activities for teachers, state and federal legislators, teachers of English language arts, and the general public.

Part I: QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

KNOWLEDGE. Teachers of English language arts need knowledge in the following areas:

Language Development
Teachers should understand that growth in language maturity is a developmental process; ways in which students develop in understanding and using language; how speaking, listening, writing, reading, and thinking are interrelated; and ways in which social, cultural, and economic environments influence language learning.

Composing and Analyzing Language
Teachers should comprehend the processes and elements involved in the acts of composing in oral and written forms (such as subject, purpose, audience, point of view, mood, tone, and style); major developments in language history; major grammatical theories of English; dialects and levels of usage; and how people use language and visual images to influence the thinking and actions of others.

Reading and Literature
Teachers should understand how students respond to their reading and how they interpret it, how readers create and discover meaning from print, as well as monitor their comprehension. They should be familiar with an extensive body of literature and literary types in English and in translation, including works by female and minority writers; understand the wide range of literature available

to children and adolescents and the developmental connections that deepen responses to literature; and understand literature as a source for exploring and interpreting human experience.

Nonprint and Instructional Media
Teachers should understand how nonprint and nonverbal media differ from print and verbal media; and how to evaluate, select, and use an array of instructional materials and equipment that can help students perform instructional tasks, as well as understand and respond to what they are studying.

Evaluation
Teachers should be familiar with evaluative techniques for describing students' progress in English; and should understand the uses and abuses of testing instruments and procedures.

Research
Teachers should comprehend and be able to use appropriately major historical and current research findings in the content of the English curriculum.

PEDAGOGY. Teachers of English language arts must be competent in the following areas:

Instructional Planning
Teachers must be able to select, design, and organize objectives, strategies, and materials for teaching English language arts; incorporate research findings in the instructional program; and organize students for effective whole-class, small-group, and individual work in English language arts.

Instructional Performance
Teachers must be able to use a variety of effective instructional strategies appropriate to diverse cultural groups and individual learning styles; and employ a variety of stimulating instructional strategies that aid students in their development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities.

Instructional Assessment
Teachers should be able to ask questions at varying levels of abstraction that elicit personal responses, as well as facts and inferences; respond constructively and promptly to students' work; and assess student progress and interpret it to students, parents, and administrators.

Instruction in Oral and Written Language
Teachers should be able to help students develop the ability to recognize and use oral and written language appropriate in different social and cultural settings; guide students in experiencing and improving their process of speaking, listening, and writing for satisfying their personal, social, and academic needs and intentions; and help students develop an appreciation for the history, structure, and dynamic quality of the English language.

Instruction in Reading, Literature, and Nonprint Media
Teachers should be able to guide students in experiencing and improving their processes of reading for personal growth, information, understanding, and enjoyment; guide students toward enjoyment, aesthetic appreciation, and critical understanding of literary types, styles, themes, and history; and help students toward enjoyment and critical understanding of nonprint forms.

Instructional Uses of Emerging Technologies
Teachers should be able to help students make appropriate use of computers and other emerging technologies to improve their learning and performance.

Instruction in Language for Learning
Teachers should be able to help students use oral and written language to improve their learning.

ATTITUDES. Teachers of English language arts need to develop the following attitudes:

Concern for Students
Teachers should have a recognition that all students are worthy of a teacher's sympathetic attention in the English language arts classroom; a desire to use the English language arts curriculum for helping students become familiar with diverse peoples and cultures; a respect for the individual language and dialect of each student; and a conviction that teachers help students grow by encouraging creative and responsible uses of language.

Adaptability
Teachers should demonstrate a willingness to seek a match between students' needs and teachers' objectives, methods, and materials for instruction in English language arts; and to encourage students to respond critically to all the different media of communication.

Professional Perspective
Teachers should show a commitment to continued professional growth in the teaching of English language arts; a pride in the teaching of English language arts and a willingness to take informed stands on current issues of professional concern; and a sensitivity to the impact that events and developments in the world outside the school may have on teachers, their colleagues, their students, and the English language arts curriculum.

Part II: EXPERIENCES IN PREPARING EFFECTIVE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

To be successful, a preparation program must provide prospective teachers with models of effective teaching by means of the instruction they receive; encourage prospective teachers to analyze the nature of effective teaching; and place prospective teachers in schools where they can observe and practice various aspects of effective teaching.

Models of Effective Teaching
A successful teacher education program should include instruction based on a conception of the prospective teacher as an active learner; teaching strategies in all courses (but especially in English language arts) that assure active student participation; experiences that develop prospective teachers as effective language users; instruction that models sound scholarship and reflects knowledge of research and theory; and faculty attitudes that model concern for the individual student.

Analysis of Effective Teaching
Prospective teachers should be encouraged to analyze the nature of effective teaching through knowledge of research and theory related to teaching. They should also understand the theory and practice of evaluating student progress. In their training, they should actually participate in activities they expect students to perform. They should have many opportunities to study the relationships between language usage and the various characteristics of students from a wide variety of ethnic groups, cultural backgrounds, exceptionalities, and levels of maturity and academic ability.

Observation and Practice of Effective Teaching
Prospective teachers should be placed in schools where they can observe and practice various aspects of effective teaching. It is crucial that the proper environment is established for gaining insight; that cooperating teachers are carefully selected to be representative of the best teaching of English language arts; that the instructional events observed are chosen to provide a com-

prehensive picture of excellent teaching; and that prospective teachers, through such activities as journal writing, interviewing, and discussing, have opportunities to analyze the teaching they witness.

NETWORKING WITH OTHER DISCIPLINES: A NEW EMPHASIS IN THE 1990s

With the movement toward interdisciplinary studies, the Standing Committee on Teacher Preparation and Certification wishes to suggest a need to network with other disciplines, a need not addressed in the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts.* In its first meeting in the fall of 1990, the Curriculum Congress, organized by the Education Commission of the States and Collaboratives for Humanities and Arts Teaching, called for finding common understandings about what to teach in the nation's schools and how to teach it. One of the concerns was the time recommended for instruction in all subject areas, which would require a seven-day work week and a 60-week year. Another concern was the number of reports being issued on a subject-by-subject basis without cross-subject communication. It was agreed that classes should emphasize ways in which students can be taught to think critically, solve problems, and be more creative. All of these skills revolve around communication, a major goal not only for English teachers, but for all teachers. It is imperative, therefore, that all disciplines seek common ground and support each other in the education of our children and youth.

One purpose of the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts* is to inform our colleagues in other disciplines of recommendations for the preparation of English language arts teachers and to share with them perceptions of the nature of English education in meeting changing educational conditions. This sharing may lead to a mutual recognition that the processes and activities teachers use in one discipline can clearly support the processes and activities used in other disciplines. Such knowledge and subsequent support of each discipline may bring new life and vitality to classroom instruction and provide our students with meaningful understandings and skill development that will allow them to lead productive lives.

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CALLS FOR MANUSCRIPTS— PLANS FOR FUTURE ISSUES

The *English Leadership Quarterly,* a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary/secondary/college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are always encouraged.

Software reviews and book reviews related to the themes of the upcoming issues are welcomed. Inquiries about guest editorship of an issue are encouraged.

Recent surveys of our readers reveal these topics of interest: leadership training for the new department chair, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, the tracking/grouping controversy, problems of rural schools, the value of tenure, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

October 1992 (July 1 deadline):
Literacy: The Crisis Mentality

December 1992 (September 15 deadline):
Alternative Schools/Alternative Programs

February 1993 (November 1 deadline):
Parent Involvement and Participation
Guest Editor: Lela M. DeToye
School of Education, Southern Illinois University
Edwardsville, IL 62026-1122. (618-692-3433)

May 1993 (February 1 deadline):
Political Questions: Censorship, Standards, Certification, Proactive Lobbies, and Legislation

Manuscripts may be sent on 5.25- or 3.5-inch floppy disks, with IBM compatible ASCII files or as traditional, double-spaced typed copy. Address articles and inquiries to: James Strickland, Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly,* English Department, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, 16057-1326. (FAX 412-738-2096)

SPECIAL GUEST-EDITED ISSUE: PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

by Lela M. DeToye
Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

As guest editor for the February 1993 issue, I am issuing a call for manuscripts that look at partnerships between English/language arts teachers and parents, and even the wider community. In particular, I am looking for articles describing success stories in,

—methods to secure parental support (for curriculum changes, detracking efforts, problems dealing with censorship);
—school/parent contacts;
—ways to promote parental involvement and/or volunteerism;
—"Back to School Nights";
—business and industry partnerships with English/language arts departments.

Address articles and inquiries to: Lela M. DeToye, School of Education, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, Illinois 62026-1122 (618-692-3433).

Announcements

NOTICE OF PROPOSED BYLAW AMENDMENT AND DUES INCREASE

In March, the CEL Executive Committee voted to recommend an amendment to Article X of the Bylaws of the Conference on English Leadership which will allow the CEL Executive Committee to determine the dues structure rather than require a bylaw amendment to set the exact amount of dues, as is currently mandatory. The rationale for this proposed amendment is that the current bylaws do not allow for prompt response to fiscal concerns requiring action or remedy. Currently, a change in dues structure requires passage of an amendment to the CEL bylaws, which in turn requires either affirmation by members present at an annual business meeting or by respondents to a mail ballot sent to the entire CEL membership. Both methods require at least thirty days prior notice to the membership. The proposed change in Article

X is needed to allow the CEL Executive Committee to evaluate and adjust the dues structure periodically as economic conditions change.

The immediate need for this proposed bylaw amendment is related to the CEL Executive Committee's recommendation that a $5 increase in dues be instituted. The current fee of $10 has not been increased for many years, while printing costs for *ELQ* and operation expenses of the organization have escalated.

Look for further information and a ballot on the proposed bylaw change in the October issue of the *English Leadership Quarterly.*

SEARCH FOR NEW EDITOR FOR CEL's *ENGLISH LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY*

The Conference on English Leadership (CEL) is seeking a new editor for the *English Leadership Quarterly.* In May 1994 the term of the present editor will end. Interested persons should send a letter of application to be received no later than November 2, 1992. Letters should be accompanied by the applicant's vita, one sample of published writing, and two letters of general support from appropriate administrators at the applicant's institution. Do not send books, monographs, or other materials which cannot be easily copied for the Search Committee.

Applicants are urged to hold conversations with administrators on the question of institutional support for the responsibilities of the editorship of this journal. Information about institutional support and about support from CEL can be obtained by calling or writing to Cliff Maduzia, Director of Publication Services, at NCTE (217/328-3870). The applicant appointed by the CEL Executive Committee will effect transition, preparing for his or her first issue to be published in October 1994. The initial appointment is for four years, renewable for three years. Applications should be addressed c/o Cliff Maduzia, *English Leadership Quarterly* Search Committee, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

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ENGLISH LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY

Conference on English Leadership

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In This Issue

LITERACY

by James Strickland, editor

Written on the image of a blackboard, a self-referencing message in chalk proclaims, "700,000 graduating seniors can't read this." There it is again—the literacy crisis, this time bemoaned on the front page of a coupon insert in my Sunday paper. The advertising copy following the message said, "We want our children to be the best and the brightest in the world; but, schools can't always afford the equipment and enhancements that are necessary for quality education." If I wanted to help, all I would have to do is purchase the products described in the insert, and Nestlé would donate a nickel for every coupon redeemed. Still, although I would like to believe that it's all that simple—that there is a connection between being the best and the brightest and having the right equipment and enhancements—and although I support the recipient of Nestlé's generosity, the Reading Is Fundamental program, I believe that the only equipment those 700,000 seniors need are books—real books—and the only enhancements they need are teachers—knowledgeable, caring facilitators—unfettered by federal and state bureaucracies, mandates of minimum competencies, and hype in the press about some other nation's superiority.

Furthermore, I do not believe that those 700,000 seniors would learn to read if we installed a program of cultural literacy checklists, if we imposed a more rigid system of discipline, or if we purchased a warehouse full of computers, electron microscopes, and video laserdisc programs. Those 700,000 seniors, and thousands of others following them, will not become readers until we become serious about literacy and examine what happens between the first and twelfth grade. Young children love to read and be read to, but by twelfth grade they seem to have no interest in books or reading. By the time I see them as first-year college students, more than half of them respond to my inquiry about the last book they read with, "I don't read." What do all these students have in common? It's not a lack of equipment and enhancements.

There is no literacy crisis, I'm tempted to say. Rather, there are people who have difficulty functioning in the world of print, people who are uninterested in the world of print, and people whose lives would not be changed were they to read. Consider what is being done for these people. The school board for the district I live in, responding to citizen concern over school taxes, has decided to cut one reading position next year. In the same session, they decided to hire six computer specialists so that the school district would be up-to-speed. It never occurred to them that students who are having difficulty reading will also have difficulty managing the syntax of computer programs. Or maybe it did occur to them; maybe that is how the literacy crisis works. Those who are having difficulties, traditionally the lower classes and ethnic minorities, will be given less and less help—a situation worsened by the sad economy—and those who are literate will be given the advantages that accrue with success: college-prep courses and a hi-tech curriculum. Maybe the 700,000 seniors who cannot read are simply the casualties of an education program that ignores what the authors included in this issue have to say about literacy.

Elliot Eisner, distinguished professor of education and art at Stanford University, challenges the premise behind a national curriculum: namely, that we must be the best and brightest in the world. Eisner sees the literacy crisis as another smokescreen obscuring the reality of the reform movements promoted by politicians.

(continued on page 2)

Inside . . . **page number**

The Reality of Reform 2
by Elliot W. Eisner
To Be Literate 5
by William F. Williams
Literacy: The Crisis Mentality 7
by William T. Fagan
Collaboration for Critical Literacy 9
by Pamela Farrell
***Classics Illustrated* Comics: Promoting Personal Response** 10
by George I. Martin
Convention Preview: Leading Change 12
by Louann Reid
Announcements 13
CEL Bylaw Amendment 14
CEL Election Slate 1992 14

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Bill Williams, my colleague at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, examines the rhetoric of the literacy crisis. Williams questions not only the methods for arriving at the shocking statistics (i.e., "700,000 graduating seniors"), but also the underlying assumptions used to define literacy. He asks, what does it mean to be literate?

William Fagan, presently a visiting professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland, examines the literacy crisis as it is portrayed in Canada. Remarkably, the crisis promoters there use the same type of definitions and statistics to present an equally bleak picture for our neighbors to the north.

Pamela Farrell and George Martin close the issue by offering new solutions to the literacy crisis. Farrell, presently the Caldwell Chair of Composition at The McCallie School in Tennessee, shares some approaches to increasing critical literacy through interactive learning, approaches developed during her 25 years of teaching at the Red Bank Regional High School in New Jersey. Martin, professor in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, takes the unorthodox position of actually recommending that students read comic books. I hope the "education president" doesn't hear about this one.

THE REALITY OF REFORM

by Elliot W. Eisner
Stanford University

(Adapted from an article that appeared in the October 1991 issue of Educational Leadership.*)*

From the time we began reflecting on the quality of our American schools, we have searched for the single golden lever that would improve them. Public discontent with schools around the turn of the century motivated many American educationalists to follow the precepts of Frederick Taylor (R. Callahan. 1962. *Education and the Cult of Efficiency.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press). After all, Taylor's scientific management was heralded for improving the productivity of factories, increasing the profits to shareholders, and indirectly enhancing the earnings of workers. The Efficiency Movement, as it was called, was regarded as the most modern, up-to-date means through which waste could be eliminated. Of course, a scientific system to eliminate educational waste is not a bad thing; it simply did not work.

The hunt for a simple way to make schools efficient and effective has been a familiar feature of our educational history. In recent years, American educators have seen the ebb and flow of mastery learning, outcome-based education, team teaching, cooperative learning, flexible scheduling, open education, school-based management, restructuring, and, of course, a retreat into the educational past nostalgically referred to as "back to the basics." So familiar, in fact, are these reforms that veteran teachers are often more than a little skeptical of new ideas.

The latest lever for the reform of American schools comes from the highest office in our land. Announced at the White House on April 18, 1991, it takes the form of a multidimensional plan that includes a national system of examinations (the forthcoming American Achievement Test), a national report card, funding for model schools, and financial incentives for achievement in what are euphemistically called "the core academic subjects." None of the proposals are new; model schools have been present for decades, and national testing has been around in one form or another since the National Assessment of Educational Progress emerged almost 20 years ago. And as far as new goals are concerned, it was only a few years ago—eight, to be exact—that the keys for school reform in *A Nation at Risk* (USA Research. 1984. Cambridge, MA) appeared on the front pages of virtually every periodical published and on the evening news of almost every television channel providing it. Who now recalls "the five new basics," at that time the newest prescription for educational reform?

Should America Have a National Curriculum?

Although the president did not announce it, the American Achievement Test must surely be a forerunner to the creation of a national curriculum, since it seems unlikely that there could be meaningful comparisons of student performance if there were not also a common curriculum that prepared youngsters for such an examination. The question this article raises is whether, on balance, it would be educationally enhancing for America to have a national curriculum. Would we be better off? Would the educational experiences of students in our schools be enriched? Would we better serve students now referred to as "at risk"?

To answer such questions, it is important to understand not only what motivates the search for the single golden lever for educational improvement, but also what drives the appetite for a common body of subjects to be studied by all our students. For Americans do seem to endorse a national curriculum. The Gallup Poll (A. Gallup and D. Clark. 1987. "The 19th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools." *Kappan* 69 [1]: 17–30) taken only five years ago indicates that most Americans believe that standardized goals and a standardized curriculum are desirable.

The motives for a national curriculum, and, I might add, for a national examination system, emanate from a low level of public confidence in our schools. Though the 1987 Gallup Poll indicates that the public provides solid positive ratings for local schools, it also indicates that the public is less than content with schools as a whole. That the public would give high grades to neighborhood schools but low grades to schools in general is understandable. The mass media do not provide a positive picture of the performance of schools in this nation. Although from time to time the exceptional school will be portrayed in glowing color, such schools are clearly portrayed as exceptions. Moreover, the public is consistently reminded that the school drop-out rate is about 25 percent overall; they are seldom reminded that in the 1940s less than half of those entering high school finished four years later. The public is also consistently reminded that on international comparisons of mathematics achievement, American students rank in the fourth quartile. Combined with current levels of functional illiteracy among the high school and adult population,

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these "reminders" produce a pervasive feeling that educators need to be monitored, if not managed, and that our schools are in a state of crisis.

The proposal to develop a national curriculum is thus a "natural" outgrowth of the public's desperate feeling that our educational ship is sinking. In any case, a national curriculum is a necessity if a national examination system is to provide data that make it possible to interpret the meaning of student performance. It makes little sense to use a common scale to measure students who have been traveling down very different roads. By homogenizing local and regional differences, by getting all students to run on the same track, and then using a common metric, it will, at last, be possible to display—more precisely than we do at present—how well each state and eventually each school district is doing. The assumption is that competition and the positive and negative reinforcement coming from the public display of test scores will be the carrot and stick that will give this nation the kind of schools that it wants and that its children deserve.

The Irony of the Plan

It is particularly ironic—even paradoxical—that at the same time national prescriptions for reform are emanating from both the White House and various state houses, there is increasing interest in and acknowledgment of our nation's cultural diversity and the need for site-specific planning. The homogenizing tendencies of a national curriculum and examination system seem to fly in the face of this interest and acknowledgment. Moreover, national programs for educational reform flout America's long tradition of state and local control of the schools. After all, the U.S. Constitution says nothing about education, and what it does not say belongs to the federal government typically becomes the province of the states. In education, it is the state that is the responsible agency, and it is the state that defines the minimal educational conditions under which its schools are to function. In view of the fact that the conventional Republican platform emphasizes the importance of states' rights and the concept of federation, the move on the part of big government into what has been historically local territory seems particularly egregious.

If these conditions seem to conflict with proposals for a national curriculum, consider further the growing interest in the professionalization of teaching. Clearly, professionalization in any endeavor means having a hand in defining the aims of the enterprise. If teachers are to be more than skilled technicians who execute the purposes of another (a conception that Plato described as slavery), then teachers and school administrators must be more than implementers of techniques that serve the purposes of others. There must be appropriate play between the generalized educational purposes of the community in which schools function and the particular goals and activities that are considered appropriate for individual students in particular classrooms located in specific schools. In other words, neither educational practice nor its aims should be remote-controlled by national or state leaders.

There are other ironies as well. We are living at a time in which there is a growing interest in school-based management. When such management pertains to more than who decides where to spend district allocated funds, it must address the selection and management of ends as well as the management and allocation of resources. But what is particularly perplexing is the substitution of slogans for reflective thought. Consider our need to be "number one." The image of America as first in mathematics and science seems initially attractive. We all like to be first. But upon reflection, just what does being first in mathematics and science mean? Is it assumed that being first in an international race means that we not only have a national curriculum, but a *world* curriculum as well? Does it mean that our students come out first on a *world* examination? Is it assumed that being first in mathematics and science will ensure a better life and good jobs? Clark Kerr's (1991. "Is Education Really All That Guilty?" *Education Week*, 27 February, 30) analysis of the feckless relationship between the quality of schooling and our nation's economic condition undercuts any argument that there is a strong causal relationship between test scores and the state of our economy. As far as I can tell, there has been no rationale, compelling or otherwise, to support the aspiration to be first, aside from the almost knee-jerk reaction that first is a good thing to be.

The proposals that have been made for the reform of schooling in America are reflections of ignorance and, I believe, of task avoidance. Only those who have not taken the time to study our schools would conclude that competition among the states is a good way to increase the quality of education. If competition were enough to revolutionize and improve an enterprise, the American automobile industry would not be in the trouble it is. Furthermore, in all of the proposals for educational reform, there is the tacit assumption that the most important outcomes of schooling are measurable and that a common test or array of assessment tasks will lend itself to a procedurally objective way of making meaningful measured comparisons. Such an assumption, widely held even among some social scientists, reflects a naiveté regarding both the ways in which the world can be described and the limits of quantification in revealing what one has observed.

To describe a human being in numbers alone is to say *some* important things about that person's features. Yet it is also to neglect those features that do not lend themselves to quantitative description, and the features neglected may be precisely those considered most important for particular purposes. If I want to purchase a pair of shoes for a friend, knowing my friend's shoe size is important, but it is also important to understand what kind of shoes my friend is likely to desire.

There is also the assumption that comparisons among 50 states serving 47 million students attending 110,000 schools overseen by 1,600 school boards can be meaningful. We seem to believe that somehow, by way of the most minimal of academic facts and competencies, differences among the backgrounds of students and the values of the community will be overridden so that a telling comparative picture of the significant educational consequences of schooling can be publicly revealed. I do not believe that this is likely, and I know for certain that we are not currently in a position to even approximate such an aspiration.

What is even more troublesome is that almost all of the national proclamations for school reform, including those demanding higher standards and tougher courses, neglect the deeper mission of schooling: the stimulation of curiosity, the cultivation of intellect, the refinement of sensibilities, the growth of imagination, and the desire to use these unique and special human potentialities. Instead, we talk about being number one in this or that, or of reducing the drop-out rate, as if dropping out may not sometimes be appropriate when what is provided is not worth the time required to earn a high school diploma.

This neglect of the deeper mission of schooling is paralleled only by the unwillingness to address the complex, systemic features of schooling, especially those pertaining to what teachers need. The president's national reform effort pays virtually no attention to the school as an organization, as a workplace, as a slice of culture, as a community displaying a certain ethos, or as an array of intellectual and social norms. In short, we have focused our attention on symptoms, and shallow ones at that, and have ne-

glected the deeper structural conditions that impede the improvement of schools. Our national tendency is toward bandwagon solutions; the slogan "Just say no to drugs" finds its educational counterpart in "First in science and math by the year 2000." While these deeper structural issues are neglected, funds for schools are being cut. Educators are being told to do more with less. Such a policy is not likely to succeed.

Our Need for Professionalism

The impediments to genuine school reform are not located only in inadequate educational policy and shallow analyses of schools; they are also located within our own profession. For example, as a profession, we are currently unable to give the public an assessment of our own schools in ways that reflect what we really care about. Our ability as a profession to assess what matters and to provide a telling picture of both the strengths and weaknesses of our institution and the capabilities of our students—in dimensions that have educational, not simply statistical, significance—is quite short of what we need. This shortfall has been a function, in part, of our history in testing. We have looked toward specialized agencies to provide precise, discrete, measured indicators of student performance on tests that reflect more the technical aspirations of psychometricians than the educational values of teachers. We have been part of a tradition that has not served us well, and we have not as a profession created alternatives.

Furthermore, there is more than a little ambivalence in our own behavior concerning test scores. We have a strong tendency to decry the educational poverty of test scores and then turn around and use them as indices of our own success, thus legitimating the validity of the public's concerns about the quality of education. If test scores in their conventional form do not reveal what really matters in schools, we should not use them to judge our "success." At the same time, until we have something that is better than what we have been using, I fear we will be obliged to continue to use what, from an educational perspective, has little value.

It is not only the state of assessment that influences the quality of our schools; it is also our reluctance to carefully scrutinize our own teaching and administration of schools. In far too many schools, principals and teachers resist the kind of collegial critique that would, in the long run, enlarge our understanding of our own professional practices. In too many schools, the classroom is something like a boudoir. One enters only by invitation, and that requires an advance notice. Indeed, in some school districts, it is not possible for someone to visit a class without a three-day advance warning. We have too often thought about teaching as something so fragile, so personal, so precious in character that it would somehow be corroded by even a friendly critique. And as for welcoming the critique of administrators, our reception makes the principal the loneliest of professionals in school. The result is that the level of our pedagogical practice often remains flat after the first three or four years of teaching. We simply do not expand our repertoire very much—or our consciousness of how we ourselves function. Being a principal or a teacher has been and remains today a largely isolated and insular profession.

In addition to the neglect of our own teaching, we have not, on the whole, established the kinds of links with parents that would enable them to understand the conditions of our workplace and their own role in their children's education. Parents are potentially a major source of support, and the back-to-school night is simply not an adequate way to help them understand the educational conditions that teachers need and that children deserve. Defining roles in schools that make it possible for teachers to build coalitions with parents is important, especially so for students whose parents might not have the kind of academic background that some parents can draw upon to assist their children in their school work.

Turning It Around

What is it that might be done to turn this situation around? How do we create schools whose faculties no longer make superficial adaptations to the latest cure for educational ills, but rather address the more fundamental aspects of the enterprise? At minimum, I believe we need to question our own educational traditions and challenge our own all-too-comfortable habits. What are these traditions? What are these habits? What do we take for granted that we might better problematize? I have a few candidates to suggest. They come in the form of questions.

Why do we shift elementary school students from teacher to teacher at the end of each academic year, just when teachers have come to know their students? Why not keep the same students with the same teacher for at least two years, preferably even three, rather than moving them as we do now from one teacher to another?

Why do we organize high school schedules so that students change subjects, locations, and teachers every 50 minutes? What occupation can you name in which the worker changes the nature of his or her work every 50 minutes, moves to a new location, and works under the direction of a new supervisor? Why must high schools be organized as a form of musical chairs in which the music plays for 7 minutes after every 50?

Why do we organize subjects in such a way that almost guarantees students will have a fragmented approach to problems that are better solved by an integrated vision? I can certainly understand why a physicist, chemist, or historian might need to focus deeply, if not always widely, in order to secure a depth of understanding that would allow him or her to make important scholarly contributions in the discipline. But our students are not being prepared for any single discipline. The problems they will encounter are those that almost always require synthetic abilities and multiple perspectives. Yet we organize curricula to almost ensure that a student who is enrolled in classes in U.S. history and American literature may never suspect that there might be a relationship between the two. We have created—out of nothing but habit and tradition—a collection-type curriculum (B. Bernstein. 1971. "On the Classification and Framing of Educational Knowledge." In *Knowledge and Control,* edited by Michael F.D. Young. London: Collier-Macmillan) that makes integration unlikely. Each subject comes in its own box with its own wrapper and is evaluated by its own test. And each usually has nothing to do with anything else that a student might be studying.

Why do we insist on using incentives to motivate students that relentlessly teach them to keep their eye on the grade they wish to receive rather than on the journey on which they have embarked? Why do we try to modify their behavior by employing a banking model of teaching and learning? Why do we habituate the young to seek extrinsic rewards that have no intrinsic connection to what they are studying? What will happen to those students when the extrinsic rewards are no longer there?

Why do we define teaching roles so that teachers must permanently change their occupation in order to do something other than teach within their own school? In American schools there are basically only two professional roles: teacher and principal. Why not define pedagogical roles more broadly and flexibly, so that teachers can spend a year mentoring their younger colleagues, working on curriculum development, developing better assessment methods, or creating liaisons with community agencies such as museums, hospitals, cultural centers, nursing homes, and busi-

nesses? Why do we assume that the role of teacher should be restricted to a permanent assignment, working exclusively with the young, five to six periods a day, fifty minutes each, five days a week, for forty weeks?

These are only a few of the traditions that have shaped the character of our work. They are traditions that I believe need to be examined—and carefully. We ought not to assume that the optimal conditions of educational life must operate within the parameters we have inherited. We ought not to believe that excellence in teaching is best achieved when the practice is carried out in isolation. We ought to question the assumption that grade levels accurately circumscribe the increasingly broad range of achievement characteristic of growing children and adolescents.

To take school reform seriously, we will need to think about much more than a national curriculum, or even the improvement of a local one. Schools will not be bullied into excellence by a national report card. We will need to think more comprehensively and more wisely. We will need to think big, even though in many places we will need to start small.

Five Dimensions of Reform

I close with the identification of five dimensions that I believe we cannot afford to neglect if America is to have the kind of schools it needs. These dimensions are the intentional, the structural, the curricular, the pedagogical, and the evaluative.

The first of these involves the serious, studied examination of what really matters in schools. If the development of curiosity is important, we should do something about it. If we are really interested in fostering creative thinking skills in our children, we will need to see to it that they have opportunities to think creatively in school. If we are interested in developing high levels of sensibility and the ability to secure meaning from the variety of forms in which meaning is represented in our culture, we will need to take multiple forms of literacy seriously. For such intentions to be realized, we will need to address the characteristics of our curriculum, its features, our teaching, the forms of our evaluative practices, and the nature of our workplace. We have to deal with all of it. Still, although I have my own educational commitments, I am not at this point promulgating a specific agenda of educational aims. My point here is that what really matters, well beyond the so-called basics, needs serious attention—attention that I do not believe it has received.

Aims are aspirations. What also needs attention is where those aspirations are to be realized: the workplace. How schools are structured, how roles are defined, and how time is allocated are all extraordinarily important in facilitating, or constraining, educational opportunities. The structural organization of schools has not changed much in the 40 years since I was a high school student. We still start school in September and end in June. In most places, secondary school still lasts four years. During these four years we still prescribe four years of English, two or three years of math, two or three years of social studies, and two or three years of science. All of this is still offered in classes of 30 students typically taught by a solitary teacher whose desk is still located somewhere in the front of the room. Grades are still given several times a semester, and upon the completion of a course, the student is still promoted to the next grade. With minor variations, this mode of school organization is virtually the same one that I experienced at the John Marshall High School in Chicago, Illinois, from 1946 to 1950. This structure, I am asserting, influences the scope of our possibilities, and that scope is much too restrictive.

The third dimension is curricular. The ideas that populate a curriculum are of extraordinary importance. We need to think about those ideas more deeply than we have. We especially need to think about the means through which students engage them. The meaning of an idea is not independent of the way in which it is encountered. The design of curricula must include attention to ideas that matter, skills that count, and the means through which students and programs interact.

But no program, regardless of how well designed, teaches itself. The fourth dimension, the pedagogical, cannot be neglected. If teaching is weak or insensitive, whatever virtues the curriculum might possess will be for naught. The teacher is the prime mediator of life in the classroom, and improving the quality of teaching ought to be a primary concern. This improvement will require, as I have suggested earlier, redefining the teacher's role and providing the time needed to treat teaching as an art, one that requires the same level of connoisseurship, scrutiny, assistance, and support that any performing art requires. Put another way, improving the quality of teaching will require that we recognize that the primary location for teacher growth is the workplace, the setting in which one's professional life is led. Schools have to be places that serve teachers so that they can, in turn, serve students.

Finally, we must pay attention to matters of evaluation. Our evaluation practices operationally define what really matters for students and teachers. Consequently, if these practices do not reflect our most cherished values, they will surely undermine them. Moreover, we need to approach educational evaluation not simply as a way of scoring students, but as a way in which to find out how well we and our students are doing so that we can better ourselves as teachers. Evaluation should be regarded as an educational medium, an important source for school improvement.

My thesis in this article is that current proclamations to reform schools by proposals for national examinations and a national curriculum are a reflection of ignorance and, ironically, a diversion from what really needs attention in schools. These short-term policies reflect quick-fix nostrums and are destined to fail. We have tried them, and they do not work. But we too, those of us privileged to work in education, have to escape the traditions to which we have been fettered, the traditions that hamper our work. This escape will take courage and skill, for without them, our efforts at improvement will be impeded by conditions that will eventually overwhelm our best efforts.

We need to address the task of improving schools with the kind of vision and complexity that does them justice. We need, I believe, to think about our intentions and their implications for what we actually do in school. This thinking will surely include attention to the structure of our workplace, the character of our curricula, the improvement of our teaching practices, and the forms that we employ to appraise the quality of the life we lead. Nothing less will give us what we say we want. From my perspective, teachers, school administrators, and university professors sensitive to the complexities of schooling improvement can become a reality, rather than just another golden lever that brings a cynical smile to the lips of those who have seen so many offered up as a way to reform schools.

TO BE LITERATE

by William F. Williams
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According to the figures generated by our national census and reported to the United Nations, the United States has reached about a 99 percent literacy rate, an increase of about 20 percent over the last 100 years. Yet marketing and media groups promul-

gate a different message, one similar to that in an advertisement by the ARCO Chemical Company, proclaiming in bold print that "One out of three Americans cannot read this ad." Given this discrepancy in literacy statistics, who are the one-third of Americans labeled as illiterate? And what exactly is meant by literacy? I suspect that there is no simple answer, primarily because we are dealing with a number of definitions of what it means to be literate. Indeed, as Harvey Graff, author of *The Literacy Myth* (1979. New York: Academic Press), argues, we are in the clutches of a literacy myth because we do not know "what we mean by literacy or what we expect individuals to achieve from their instruction in and possession of literacy" (323).

There are many different literacies. The attempt to define conventional literacy, for instance, might begin with the belief that reading and writing skills are what constitute literacy; a person simply is or is not literate. The military and the census bureau use a fifth-grade equivalency as a method of designating what constitutes literacy. To be considered minimally literate, a person has to be able to read and write at a level equal to someone with a fifth-grade education. Even that simple notion of conventional literacy, however, has not remained constant. Historically speaking, people were considered to be literate if they could sign their names, a skill that only three English kings between the 6th and 11th centuries had acquired. It was not until the middle of the 19th century that a male living in one of the more advanced countries of Europe could be expected to be able to sign his name.

We have all heard horror stories involving children who have graduated from high school but cannot read. In fact, the director of a literacy program in Lawrence County, Pennsylvania, claims that about one-quarter of the clients are high school graduates. The obvious question is, how can high school graduates be illiterate if literacy is defined as reading and writing at a fifth-grade level? Some other definition of literacy must be at work. Indeed, while the census estimate of literacy is based on a notion of fifth-grade equivalency, claims such as those found in the ARCO advertisement seem to be based on a definition of functional rather than conventional literacy. Rather than defining literacy as a grade-level completion, functional literacy tests whether people can accomplish tasks deemed necessary for survival in our culture, tasks such as filling out a job application, correctly addressing a letter, or correctly balancing a checkbook. By these standards, researchers find about one-fifth of the U.S. population—at least 60 million Americans—to be functionally illiterate.

Yet there are at least two problems that should urge us to be hesitant about both the numbers generated by these tests and the definition of functional literacy. First, it is difficult, if not impossible, to test all residents of the United States for functional literacy, and it is equally difficult to get a random sampling that is representative of the population as a whole. In order for a random sampling to be statistically meaningful, every person in the population of interest must have an equal chance of being selected. "The illiterates," the segment of the population that researchers most want to include, are the most difficult to identify and locate. An illiterate person is obviously not likely to respond to a newspaper ad. Furthermore, because illiteracy rates tend to be much higher for people living below the poverty level, an illiterate person is less likely to have a phone or a job. Second, researchers can hardly expect a person to demonstrate a particular ability for which he or she has never had a need to use. Someone who has lived in poverty his or her entire life would have no reason or opportunity to practice an ability such as balancing a checkbook. Functional literacy tests thus contain items that make assumptions about the culture that the people tested live in, one in which balancing checkbooks and filling out employment applications are recognizable activities.

To teach someone to balance a checkbook or write five-paragraph essays when the person can have no expectation of ever having a reason to use the skill is a waste of time for both pupil and instructor. The same person, given an adequate income and a perceived need for a checking account or writing skill, would learn and retain the same skills with a minimal amount of instruction time. One of the problems that researchers tend to forget is that certain abilities are quickly lost if they were minimally acquired in the first place and then not used for many years. Thus, a person who could read and write at the fifth-grade level when he or she was 12 might be unable to do either 30 years later, having had no reason to read or write after leaving school. Literacy is like learning to play a musical instrument or speak a second language: the gains are not permanent if the acquired ability is not practiced.

Another problem in defining literacy is that literacy, like knowledge, is a local concept. What constitutes literacy for one group does not constitute literacy for another group in another place or at another time. Literacy is no more a singular concept than is culture, and in so far as we live in a pluralistic society, we should intellectually embrace the notion of multiple literacies, each of which is valid for those who possess it.

To me, any discussion of literacies, of methods by which language technologies are manipulated, must acknowledge the importance of underlying attitudes that persons—students and teachers—bring to particular language environments. That language learners profit from meaningful interaction with their language productions, interaction that focuses on the content of the production rather than on the surface features, has been documented by research. This position, expressed by Pat Hartwell in "Creating a Literate Environment in Freshman English: Why and How" (1987. *Rhetoric Review* 6: 4–19), complies with what post-Chomskian linguistics tells us about language acquisition. Helping a student to want to read and write seems the best way to ensure that the student not only acquires the needed ability, but also retains the ability through practice after leaving the classroom. Opposition comes from those who see surface features as the primary concern in any language task: the "usage mongers," as Hartwell labels them, those who teach students that they cannot write and who then yell that we are in the midst of a literary crisis. Students of such teachers learn that they cannot write because the content of what they are writing is ignored in favor of "red penning" usage errors. The "usage mongers" fail to see that constantly correcting someone teaches that person that he or she cannot do the task and, thereby, discourages any attempt. In fact, Courtney Cazden of Harvard University found that correcting and expanding children's speech slowed their progress in learning more complex syntactic structures. In Cazden's study, a group of children who had been given meaningful interaction had more complex syntactic structures and fewer surface errors than did a group of children who had been corrected and who had their utterances expanded to a complete syntactic structure. In other words, correction and expansion contribute to the very problem they seek to eliminate.

So, what do language acquisition studies tell us about literacy? First, teaching a person that he or she cannot write seems to be part of the problem in the literacy crisis, not part of the solution. And second, children who are presented with a more natural language environment learn all of the features of the language and do so in a better fashion than those for whom certain features are highlighted (B. A. Moskowitz. 1985. "The Acquisition of Language." In *Language: Introductory Readings*, 4th ed., edited by

Virginia Clark et al. New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 53). If our goal as teachers is to get our students to read and write, rather than to convince them that they cannot learn, we must validate student attempts at reading and writing, even if those attempts do not duplicate what we would have done.

Perhaps one of the most frustrating experiences that I had as a student was to get excited about an idea, labor strenuously to write it out, turn it in, wait with excitement to see what comments my teacher had, and finally get it back with a grade and a few corrected surface features. My reaction was that my teacher did not care what I had to say, discouraging me from putting the same amount of effort into the next paper. We motivate our students to practice literacy through meaningful interaction with their productions, interaction that addresses the content of the productions, not simply a few surface features. Such interaction stimulates increased production and increased involvement in language activities because it encourages students to see these activities as meaningful expressions of self and culture, not as tests to be marked.

What does not work in literacy teaching is attempting to enforce a standard based on traditional notions of what is correct language behavior. Einar Haugen reminds us that "any scorn for the language of others is scorn for those who use it, and as such is a form of social discrimination" (1974. "The Curse of Babel." In *Language as a Human Problem,* edited by E. Haugen and M. Bloomfield. New York: Norton, p. 41). An attempt to correct student usage—if the student does not simply ignore the effort—tends to generate hostility and resistance, because correcting is in fact telling students that their heritage is wrong, that their discourse community is wrong, and that their language is wrong. "The relationship of language and identity—cultural, political, and personal—is both powerful and basic," as Beth Daniell puts it in "Against the Great Leap Theory of Literacy" (1986. *Pre/Text* 7: 189). Only by admitting students into our discourse community can we engender a desire to adhere to traditional notions of correctness. Once students want to join, we will not need to correct them; they will teach themselves the accepted features.

Of course, by learning those features, they will learn to be members of our discourse communities and lose membership in their previous community. In other words, the students will be changing identities, a painful and often isolating experience, and one most students do not willingly pursue. It thus seems much easier for us to change our notions of correctness in order to accommodate current usages and divergent speech communities than to change people in an attempt to enforce an idealized version of what once was correct.

As Jay L. Robinson argues, problems in literacy are also created by English department programs that see literacy as "an easy familiarity with a certain body of texts, a particular attitude toward them, and special practices for reading texts so that they yield the appropriate attitudes" (1985. "Literacy in the Department of English." *College English* 50: 484). The narrow view of literacy reflected in high school, college, and university English departments has its origins in the Oxford English School, founded in 1894 to serve a particular social group, one characterized as "white, literate, and at least middle class" (R. Lanham. 1983. "One, Two, Three." In *Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap,* edited by W. B. Horner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 14–19). According to Richard Lanham, the study of English (read literature from a narrow perspective) "provides a superb instrument to educate such a society. That society, alas, no longer exists" (15–16). Robinson argues that we must create new programs to teach reading and writing—literacy—to those "who have been excluded for reasons of color, linguistic background, or poverty" (486). Robinson's basic claim is that in teaching literacy, we are teaching students to be members of our discourse community. Yet they can learn to be members of our community only if we validate their communities, their ways of being in the world. To have meaningful discourse, all members must be empowered to construct meaning in a manner that is considered valid by the community. Otherwise, some members will still be excluded, left disenfranchised and silenced. I suspect, however, that even Robinson believes in the literacy myth if he believes that restructuring English departments will enable students to learn to read and write, thereby significantly changing their lives and making them members of the academic community. Such a move will work for those who come from at least a middle-class background, but I suspect more than literacy training is necessary to change the conditions of our disadvantaged citizens.

The erroneous claim that literacy is a necessary cause of economic development, an enriched life, or guaranteed employment is a primary component of the literacy myth, a belief that equates lack of literacy with "inferiority, backwardness, cultural poverty, and low intelligence" (C. Hunter, with D. Harman. 1979. *Adult Illiteracy in the United States: A Report to the Ford Foundation.* New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 15). In short, something more basic than literacy disenfranchises the minorities in our country.

We cannot expect literacy work to solve the nation's ills, but we as teachers can use literacy to help enfranchise those who have been denied a voice. We can validate the knowledge and culture of our students and show them that literacy can be used to express that knowledge to a wider community and to perpetuate portions of their cultures. Literacy can also be used to activate the disenfranchised. Indeed, Robert Pattison warns that literacy "is as likely to lead to violence and misunderstanding as to universal harmony" (1982. *On Literacy.* New York: Oxford University Press, p. 129). Therefore, while I think that teachers must be responsible for educating, they should also be aware that education does not bring with it any guarantee that learners will want to perpetuate the system that taught them to be literate. Pattison gives Iran as an example. After reaching a 70 percent literacy level in an incredibly short time, Iran's citizens violently overthrew the Shah. Literacy does not guarantee harmony.

We need to teach our students to have a critical awareness that can be expressed through language. We need to teach them the power that language has to shape the world and their ways of being in it. To do the needed teaching, we must give up on "back to basics" movements and other attempts to force students to see the world as we see it and to express it in the forms that we use to express it. Instead, we need to validate their world view and interact with their attempts to generate meaning about the world in which they live.

As I suggested earlier, the attitude brought to literacy learning is the most important element in the environment. An attitude that enables the student to see his or her language productions as important and meaningful encourages literacy in the same way that meaningful interaction encourages language learning in children. Encouraging literacy, however, requires that we accept whatever comes out of it, even that which seems to foster disharmony.

LITERACY: THE CRISIS MENTALITY

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Conceptualizing illiteracy as a crisis is nothing new, especially when the conceptualizers are politicians, media personnel, and

literacy activist groups. Yet those who would promote illiteracy as a crisis frequently resort to simplistic generalizations and illogical conclusions. For example, in the *Senate Debates* of Ottawa (March 11, 1987), J. Fairbairn argues that illiteracy in Canada "is truly a national disease and a national crisis. It spreads across all groups in our society, regardless of age, economics, or regions. It cripples individual[s] . . . for a lifetime—in a way sometimes just as deadly as a physical disability—and in doing so, it also cripples the social development and economic productivity of our country" (597). And when a newspaper reports that one-half of the social welfare recipients in a certain region are illiterate (P. Calamai. 1988. *Broken Words: Why Five Million Canadians Are Illiterate.* Ottawa: Southam Communications), the generalization seems to imply that illiteracy has caused their poverty. The crisis promoters rarely report the other side of the coin: one-half of those on welfare are literate. Crisis promoters also portray adult illiterates as "mothers running dreadful risks in their homes because they cannot read the labels on dangerous substances or the instructions to deal with accidents to themselves or to their children" and as "farmers, failing themselves, their families, and their land because they cannot keep up in an increasingly complex and technical industry where, to keep abreast of change, [one] must read and understand" (Fairbairn 1987, 597). And it is not only social welfare recipients, mothers, and farmers who are illiterate. In "Reading: The Road to Freedom" (*Canadian Living,* January 1990), J. Callwood implies that illiteracy leads to a life of crime: "People who can't read come readily to view themselves as worthless junk, and many feel they must grab what they can out of life. Canada's prisons are full of men and women who can't read" (41).

Conceptualizing illiteracy as a crisis frequently ignores facts and logic. We must therefore confront a number of realities to develop a more objective conceptualization of illiteracy. These realities include the basis for the statistical figures reported, the power of literacy, and the inseparability of literacy from a socio-economic, political, and cultural context.

Basis for Statistical Figures

The publication of the results of a Southam News study in 1987 touched off reports of a literacy crisis in Canada. The report indicated that 24 percent of Canadians were illiterate, placing Canada's illiteracy rate higher than that of Latin America and the Caribbean and well above that of other developed nations (1987. *Literacy in Canada: A Research Report.* Ottawa: Southern Communications). Before promoting this statistical report of illiteracy, however, we ought to consider the criteria by which the investigators reached their conclusions.

There were over 60 items altogether in the Southam News survey, but only two forms—a 10-item form and a 14-item form, with a 4-item overlap—were used to determine the number of illiterates in Canada. Persons who scored 7 or fewer items correct out of the 10 items on Form 1 or who scored 10 or fewer items correct out of the 14 items on Form 2 were declared illiterate. In reality, then, the ability to answer just one item separated the illiterate from the literate. Moreover, according to the results, the test forms were not equivalent. Of those individuals answering questions on Form 1, 20 percent scored low enough to be considered illiterate; 28 percent of those taking Form 2 were placed in that category. To resolve this dilemma, the investigators decided to average both percentages, arriving at the 24 percent figure. Without quibbling about the decision to use an 80 percent score as the cut-off for literacy, one might still question results that could as easily support the headline "One Out of Five Canadians Illiterate" as one proclaiming "Three Out of Ten Canadians Illiterate."

The content of the test forms should also be examined. Each item on the test forms was considered to be "functional," that is, of relevance to those taking the test. Test-takers were thus asked to answer questions using information gleaned from facsimiles of real-life reading tasks, tasks regarding such things as traffic signs, instructions on a medicine bottle, prices on a menu, a social security card, a driver's license, a telephone bill, and setting up a meeting. Of course, the presence of these items on the test forms assumed that the test-takers engaged in such activities. However, 4 of the 10 items on Form 1 were concerned with setting up a meeting. Who decided that tasks such as accessing information about a meeting from a room plan were relevant to homemakers, fishers, laborers, and recent immigrants? A panel of 24 people, the majority of whom held professional or executive jobs. Thus, the literacy standing of the country was controlled by a group of middle-class Canadians with middle-class values who felt that all other Canadians ought to subscribe to their value system, even if it was totally irrelevant to their lives.

Literacy as Power

Power and *empowerment* are perhaps the most overused terms in the current cultural conversation about adult literacy. And while these terms are frequently used to promote a crisis mentality, the concepts underlying them are often employed to provide hope. Literacy becomes the power to unlock the printed code and access messages; the newly literate can thus purchase items in a supermarket, find their way around town, read to young children, or even write to political representatives. These, however, are limited notions of power, and educators and others do a disservice to adult literacy learners by giving them the impression that literacy provides the power to solve all their problems.

Nevertheless, power can be viewed from a more significant angle. R. Fletcher maintains that empowerment is an issue only when something is wrong with society (1987. "Empowerment and Adult Education." *Australian Journal of Adult Education* 27: 9–12). He argues that if society were just, if there were no discrimination or oppression, then there would be no need for empowerment. L. Fitzclarence and H. Giroux, adopting a similar stance, state that "power is the root of all forms of behavior in which people say no, struggle, resist, use opposition forms of discourse, and dream new possibilities for human existence" (1984. "The Paradox of Power in Educational Theory and Practice." *Language Arts* 61: 472).

The notion of power as a part of becoming literate has been long advocated by Paulo Freire, who argues that learning to read and write ought to be an opportunity to really understand the meaning of using "the word"—"a human act implying reflection and action" (1985. *The Politics of Literacy.* Amherst, MA: Begin and Garvey, p. 50). Not only does Freire believe that this is an inalienable right, but he also maintains that it must be given expression through creating and recreating, deciding and choosing, and, ultimately, participating in a society's historical process. He further contends that "there is no annunciation without denunciation" (58).

That the distribution of literacy and power is highly correlated is beyond a doubt. "From the earliest times, literate members of society have had disproportionate power: priests, oracles, poets, and medicine men have all shared as the sources of their power a certain literacy, and their modern counterparts—professors, lawyers, engineers, and doctors [and we might add to this list politicians, administrators, and business executives]—continue to exercise power, in part because of their control of language" (S. G. Power. 1983. "The Politics of Literacy." In *Literacy for Life,*

edited by R. W. Bailey and R. M. Fosheim. New York: Modern Language Association, p. 24). In order to negotiate this power, argues R. Darville, the disempowered must understand that "organizational literacy" is essential to understanding a management structure that necessitates organizational writing. Darville expresses the distinction between narrative and organizational writing in terms of whether matters are "written down" or "written up." Narrative involves a writing down of experiences, whereas organizational writing involves a writing up of events in order "to enter them into an organizational process" (1989. "The Language of Experience and Literacy of Power." In *Adult Literacy Perspectives,* edited by M. C. Taylor and J. A. Draper. Toronto: Culture Concepts, p. 31). The dictated letter, the minutes of a meeting, and even a political speech may be written up for the purpose of making an impact or extending power. The logical conclusion is if the newly literate are to exercise power through writing, they must have control over writing in organizational form, control not only over the linguistic structures of organizational writing, such as problem-solving, cause-and-effect, comparison/contrast, and argument, but also control over understanding how bureaucracy works, lines of authority, use of information conveyed, degrees of insularity from public scrutiny or impact, and a philosophical consideration of which issues are worth pursuing.

The assumption that a written transaction (in organizational form) is sufficient to tap into organizational power is based on another assumption: that those who possess power are willing to share it. Sometimes it is not the language per se, whether through design or otherwise, that is the stumbling block to gaining power, but the disposition or attitude of the authority who holds power. Some authorities do not want to address the issues brought to their attention; instead, they may avoid issues by "blaming the victim" or "killing the messenger." "Old Boy Networks" still exist in many establishments, and actions seen as a challenge to such networks or any of their members result in a "freezing out" of the challenger, regardless of his or her level of literacy. Indeed, the use of literacy to negotiate power often ironically leads to the destruction of any power the challenger originally possessed.

Literacy within a Socioeconomic, Political, and Cultural Context

Illiteracy is not the cause of the breakdown of social, economic, political, and cultural institutions; nor will literacy directly lead to the strengthening of these institutions. As pointed out earlier, such views are often the result of overgeneralizing and ignoring the facts. A suggestion that posters of Michael J. Fox be put on every bus in Canada to promote literacy ignores the fact that, for many Canadians, buses are not a part of their lives—they don't ride buses; they don't see buses. Publicity campaigns that promote the crisis mentality and try to embarrass the nation into becoming literate ignore the fact that many individuals who might be classified as illiterate are leading very satisfying and productive lives; even if their reading and writing scores increased, nothing else in their lives would change.

Individuals are inseparable from their cultural values, and they interpret their actions and the actions of others within their value systems. For example, educators may perceive that parents who do not participate in the schooling of their children do so from a lack of interest. However, parents may act in this way because of "family health problems, work schedules, having small children, receiving only 'bad news' from school, and fears for safety" (O. C. Moles. 1982. "Synthesis of Recent Research on Parent Participation in Children's Education." *Educational Leadership* 40: 46). In fact, it might just as easily be that parents are operating within a culture that designates the school as the domain for literacy development. After all, it was not too long ago that textbook-readers were not allowed to be taken home for fear that parents would interfere with the school's mission of teaching children to read.

The role that literacy plays in people's lives is also culturally determined, since it depends on the value that is accorded to it. Consequently, literacy cannot be studied in isolation from the various acts and actions that give meaning and purpose to individuals' lives. A study I am conducting suggests that people within a rural area of Newfoundland (where, according to the Southam study statistics, the illiteracy rate is 44 percent, the highest in Canada) have constructed a symbolic system including many competencies and capabilities. Many of these Newfoundlanders are skilled in carpentry, electrical work, plumbing, welding, fishing, hunting, small engine repair, cooking, baking, sewing, knitting, and crafts. They operate within a very active social structure—card games, bingo, community organizations, community events, visits to and from friends and relatives. Literacy plays a limited role in the interpretation of their lives, certainly more limited than in the lives of individuals whose symbolic systems do not provide such positive and fulfilling images of themselves as individuals and of their relationships with others. Furthermore, when conditions demand, these Newfoundlanders are able to use their literacy skills (or those of others) effectively. A related study that I am currently conducting shows that in times of economic constraints, people read sales flyers critically and effectively, capitalizing on numerous "bargains," often by drawing on background knowledge not available to the investigator.

The fact that literacy is only one aspect of the analytic dimension of a community has often been overlooked by those promoting literacy as crisis. Literacy will assume a greater role for individuals only when they perceive a discrepancy between the literacy skills they possess and their ability to function within their cultural milieu, not when public announcements inform them of a literacy crisis, a crisis supposedly of their own making, a crisis that can be resolved if they, the illiterates, would only develop the will power to become literate.

COLLABORATION FOR CRITICAL LITERACY

by Pamela Farrell
The McCallie School, Chattanooga, Tennessee

As Ira Shor argues in *Freire for the Classroom: A Sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching* (1987. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook), "Student alienation is a current literacy problem" (2). Perhaps this alienation results in part from a lack of interest in what is happening in the English classroom. In many of their classes, seniors who are already working, perhaps even supporting a family, find little to interest them in improving their reading, writing, and thinking. Over the last few years, I have added some interactive and collaborative learning activities to a basic skills English class that I teach each fall. While no two classes are alike—each having its own distribution of students according to sex, race, and primary language—I have found that the interactive learning activities, as natural extensions of the student's desire to learn, do increase the critical literacy of my students.

Research Literacy

I begin our research literacy unit with an activity that calls for students to research the year in which they were born. As soon as everyone, including the teacher, admits to a year of birth, we set

up collaborative teams. The students then make individual lists of questions they want answered about their year of birth. Once everyone has done this, the teams meet at the computer and build a combined list of questions asking about such diverse matters as the weather, popular songs, political leaders, hair styles, and winners of the Super Bowl or World Series. Next the teams have to list printed sources of information that might provide the answers to their questions. I make suggestions of other possible sources after the teams share the lists of questions and sources that they have already compiled. To give students an additional avenue for research, I ask available faculty members if they would be willing to participate in an interview with student researchers. Many take great delight in pulling out old yearbooks and diaries in preparation for the interviews. MTV, radio stations, historians, and senior citizens are also pestered. Few are spared being asked questions by team members, although teachers, counselors, parents, and members of the clergy seem to get the most attention.

In this fashion, by interviewing and by researching printed matter, students gather their information. They can either split the work into equal portions or work as teams. However the work is done, within a week or two students are ready to outline their information and begin writing a first draft of a research paper. When mini-lessons in research form are needed, I present material and answer any questions. Most of the time, however, I merely move from team to team, getting involved in what they are doing and offering any assistance requested.

Once their outline is approved, each team begins writing a rough draft at the computer. I recommend that they first write a draft with only their own ideas and then, before they begin revision, print out a double-spaced copy to see where they can add details by including quotations from their sources. Some teams choose their own methods, but all know that they need to save a printout of each draft to be submitted with the final research project. Those more familiar with computers just create new files for each revision (naming their files sequentially: 1974, 1974a, 1974b, etc.).

The day that students submit their papers, we sit around and share what we've learned about the year we were born, how we discovered the information, and what we learned about research. At this point, each student has become an expert on something, and each has applied interviewing and research techniques that he or she will be able to use again. And through interactive learning activities at the computer, the students have generated new ideas and techniques that they can adapt to their own writing and reading. As Frances Christie suggests, "Persons achieve identity and individuality in social situations, by consistent engagement in processes of building, affirming and reaffirming their collective sense of the reality they share" (1985. "Language and Schooling." In *Language, Schooling, and Society,* edited by Stephen Tchudi. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, p. 23). My students have learned a form of research literacy through a personal interest project.

Follow-Up Activities

What happens after this research literacy project is completed depends upon the interests and desires of each group of students for each particular year. We decide together the kind of reading, writing, and thinking that interests us most. The students might thus choose to read fiction and nonfiction about a particular historical incident (one year a student was convinced that William Jennings Bryan was murdered after the Scopes Trial; I remember with delight how he tried everything, even pausing an 8mm film loop, frame by frame, to look for the murderer!), or they might choose to research a current issue of concern (for instance, one year a student's best friend was badly beaten by her parent, so students wanted to research child abuse). I have had an all-male class of football players and patriotic souls who decided to read *Johnny Got His Gun.* Each member of the class developed his own set of questions as we read, and after we finished our collaborative reading, they teamed up to research answers to the questions. Other classes have chosen to read *All Quiet on the Western Front, Going After Cacciato,* and Walt Whitman's "The Wound Dresser." Some student teams from these classes interviewed people who had fought in World War II or the Korean or Vietnamese Wars. At any rate, by the time the students finished gathering their information, writing it, and sharing it, all were emotionally drained and ready to do something else—like read mystery stories and science fiction, or begin the always popular travel unit.

Travel Literacy

Each year as winter approaches, I introduce the idea of a travel unit. I bring in dozens of brochures promoting travel to places outside the United States. Within minutes students are fighting over brochures, claiming particular vacation spots as their exclusive possessions, and questioning my purpose in doing something that has nothing to do with English. I immediately confess that although they will be reading, writing, and thinking critically and creatively in new ways while completing the travel unit, they will also gain skills that will enable them to travel anywhere in the world—once they have the time and money to do so. Perhaps they are learning the type of literacy that Robert Pattison calls the "ability to use language in our negotiations with the world" (1985. "Literacy: Confessions of a Heretic." In *Language, Schooling, and Society,* edited by Stephen Tchudi. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, p. 42). Then, by creating a list of questions we would want answered before we planned to visit a particular place, we begin to plan our trips, individually or in teams. During the research, I bring in guests to share travel experiences and show slides of their visits. If a class includes ESL students, they become immediate resources and experts (though they often have to research their own country before they can answer class questions). Since the culmination of the project is to share what each has learned, students learn to become good listeners as well.

Conclusion

These are only a few examples of interactive activities that promote literacy by using the Freirean technique of generative themes. Ira Shor concludes, "Teaching is both creative and critical. It requires inventiveness and curiosity by both teacher and learner in the process" (213). As the learners change, teachers must adapt to the language competence and needs of the group just as they must adapt to the changing literacy needs of the society.

CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED COMICS: PROMOTING PERSONAL RESPONSE

by George I. Martin
University of Virginia, Charlottesville

"This story reminds me of the time I was jumped," wrote a sophomore in a city public high school during the course of reading *Moby Dick.* He continued, "After I had been jumped and beaten I walked home with a great feeling of revenge, I could have killed someone on the spot. For the next few weeks I went out nights looking for the people who had jumped me but to no avail. After a while my feeling of revenge went away and I went on with

my life." (Student comments throughout are unedited, except where words are added to complete the meaning.) This personal response to the revenge voyage of Captain Ahab was prompted by a *Classics Illustrated* comic book, a graphically condensed version of the original.

The original *Classics Illustrated* comic books, popular in the '50s and '60s, were largely thought of as shortcuts to knowing the original works. In twenty minutes' time, students could acquaint themselves with the basic plot, characters, and settings of a classic such as *Moby Dick, A Tale of Two Cities,* or *The Scarlet Letter.* The comics predated *Cliffs Notes* and were understandably more entertaining. A friend of mine in a doctoral program in English recently confided, "Those comics got me through high school English!"

In January 1990, *Classics Illustrated* comic books reappeared, published by First Publishing/Berkeley Press. The reissues, however, differ from the original comics. The current issues, at $3.95 each, cost more than ten times the originals, although they do have sturdier pages and covers and sport better artwork. And unlike their predecessors, the new comics are written and drawn by individual artists who have been given interpretive license by the publishers. The result is a variety of art styles matched to the individual stories; for instance, Gahan Wilson's notoriously macabre art suits *The Raven and Other Poems,* while Rick Geary (published in *National Lampoon* and *The New York Times Book Review*) employs a more traditional style for his adaptation and description of *Wuthering Heights.*

A Pilot Study

Shortly after these new comic books debuted in book stores, I began a pilot study to explore their potential use in the English classroom. I worked with 102 students (six different classes) in three diverse settings: a city public high school, a boys' military preparatory school, and a women's prison (GED program). I discovered that most of the students enjoyed reading the comics (from a low of 52.4 percent in one class to a high of 100 percent in another), that they generally found the illustrations helpful in understanding the texts (a range of 64.7 to 90.9 percent), and that some expressed an interest in reading the original works as a result of having read the comic versions (36.8 to 75.0 percent).

Many of the responses students made in the pilot study reflected more than just their impressions about the comics; they also revealed their feelings about literature and provided insights into the nature of the texts. For example, the comments of a student in a twelfth-grade academic class concerning *The Raven and Other Poems* reflect more of what he might have been told about Poe by his teachers than what he gleaned from the comics: "The pictures were a plus but it didn't keep my attention like I thought it would. Perhaps another comic would since I always have had problems deciphering exactly what Poe was trying to express. His writing is filled with so much symbolism and metaphors it is difficult to read. Probably because Poe was a mentally disturbed and imbalanced individual." Another student in the same class had this to say about *The Count of Monte Cristo*: "It's a very good story. I have problems with this however because I believe that there is no exception for the original. I feel by reading an abridged version you loose a lot of details that drive the story [and] make [it] more interesting. With the pictures these are left in the hands of the artists not the author so they can help or hurt. It may give you something to identify however it leaves less to your own thought and imagination which in some works is a vital part. I feel this may encourage someone to read the original, however some may also feel that they need not to read the original after reading this."

Not all the students reflected the pejorative stance of their previous schooling. A ninth-grade student in a general class reacted differently: "I liked [*The Count of Monte Cristo*] because it was more fun to read than a three to four hundred page book. The illustrations were good and detailed." At the same public school, a student in an academic class echoed her general class counterpart regarding a preference for abridged texts; she wrote, "I like that [the *Classics Illustrated* version of *Wuthering Heights*] was condensed, and I also liked the comics. It's much *much* better than a book. I am more willing to read this than a book. [The illustrations] were pretty cool. I think the colors were a little too dark. It makes it look gloomy. Use bright colors. I am encouraged to read the original to the full extent. Do you know where it can be found?" One student from the military academy wrote this about *A Christmas Carol*: "The comic was pretty good. The illustrations were dark and gloomy which was good because they depicted the tone of the story. I have read the work before. I'm more likely to read again the work now that I have had [additional] exposure to it."

A few of the women prisoners tended to be more judgmental in their comments than the students at other locations. One woman, referring to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* seemed to take on the role of critic/salesperson: "What I liked about the comic was how remarkable it was for one person to live such a horrible life. It's a finely crafted tale, it gives the world's most talented representation of the original work. It's unique, yet so real, people should read more classics."

Conference Findings

As a result of my presentations at two conferences—the Virginia Association of Teachers of English and the Virginia Association of Independent Schools—I learned that once English teachers had seen the comics, nearly all (93 percent) recommended their use for pleasure reading by their students. Before my presentation—designed to acquaint teachers with the comics and seek their ideas—only 34 percent of the teachers would consider letting a student substitute a comic for the original work, but after my session, 59 percent said they would allow for such a substitution. Other findings also bear mentioning: before the session only 47 percent would consider using the comics to complement the English curriculum, compared to 90 percent after the session; 80 percent would consider suggesting that a student read a comic to preview or review a work before the session, compared to 93 percent after.

Study Involving Written Personal Responses

With the findings of my pilot study and the responses from my conference presentations in mind, I wondered how the comics might be used "to promote writing as a mode of thinking" (to echo Janet Emig's words). I thus presented three complete sets of *Classics Illustrated* comics (27 different works have been published thus far) to two senior classes and one sophomore class in a rural central Virginian high school (using 61 students in the study, out of a total enrollment of 587). Students responded in writing to one comic a week for four weeks, both *as* they read and immediately *after* they completed each reading.

Before the students began reading and writing, I modeled personal/aesthetic responses using a slide of the cover of *The Count of Monte Cristo* comic; then the students wrote their own personal responses to another slide, this one showing the cover of the *Tom Sawyer* comic. An introduction to personal-response writing was important, as most of the students had been previously discouraged from doing this type of writing.

Over the course of the study, I collected and categorized students' written responses to the comics. I found that most of the responses written as the students read were personal in nature, whereas most of the responses written after they read were text-oriented. Overall, the students produced over 1,500 personal responses. Given the freedom to express their feelings, they provided some interesting insights into how they related to the texts.

A female senior's response while reading *The Invisible Man* revealed a traumatic episode in her life: "I remember when someone had robbed our house and they took me and put a gun to my head ordering my family to [give] them all they had in the house worth something. So my family did give them everything and they let me go." Another unpleasant memory was evoked when a male sophomore read *Rip Van Winkle:* "Some other memories this brings back is my aunt's brother, who was in a coma for several days before dying of AIDS. I also remember about my uncle who was in a coma for nearly a month from menanjitis before miraculously snapping out of it."

Some responses were more philosophical than dramatic. A female sophomore wrote, "[*The Call of the Wild*] is truly a story of man's best friend. If you treat them right they're the most loyal friends you'll ever have, but if you don't treat them right they're your worst enemy." In referring to *Gift of the Magi*, a female senior wrote, "Be satisfied with yourself—do not ask for what others have—people should love you for you and if they don't they're not worth it in the first place."

Some students became personally involved in the stories. A female sophomore wrote, "But Buck had a new master, a better master! Little did I know what was about to happen, John Thornton gets killed by a bunch of Indians. I was mad and very sad when I read this because I know how it feels to lose someone you love. I lost my grandma last year. I was so sorry for Buck I just wanted to grab him around the neck and squeeze him." The same student lived *Hamlet*, frame-by-frame: "The king seems to be nice and so does the queen but I'm not so sure about Hamlet (not yet)...Wow! I just found out that the new king (Hamlet's uncle) killed Hamlet's father so he could have the queen and the crown!"

Some of the responses were refreshingly lighthearted. A male senior wrote, "When [Tom Sawyer] was in the river with no clothes on makes me think about when I was little, well I was 14 years old. I used to skinny dip with this girl [gives her name!] up the road." A female sophomore, responding to *A Christmas Carol*, wrote, "Well, whenever I hear or read about ghosts I think of haunted houses. Ones just like in town on Halloween. *Boo!* HA!"

Conclusion

These and scores of other interesting responses have convinced me that the newly published editions of *Classics Illustrated* comics are worth using in the secondary English classroom. While they may or may not encourage students to read the original works, they certainly pique the students' interests and can serve as a means of eliciting personal-response writing.

In an era when visual elements (television, MTV, films) have largely replaced reading as a popular pastime, *Classics Illustrated* comics may provide the means of bridging the gap between the classical and the contemporary. The simple comment made by a student in the military school (referring to the comic version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*) probably represents what many other students across the country might say were they to become acquainted with *Classics Illustrated* comics: "I think it's a great idea for people who don't like books."

I do not want to see comics take the place of the classics; rather, I hope they will serve as a means for turning students on to reading and writing. I share the feelings of J. Warren Young, publisher of *Boys' Life*, who recently responded to a letter I wrote to him concerning the classic story illustrations in his magazine (which reaches over 7,500,000 readers): "The 'classic comics' approach we feel is correct in bringing these [classical] titles to life."

I am interested in exploring further the use of *Classics Illustrated* comics (or other "graphic novels," as illustrated texts are often called) in English classes, so I welcome comments.

Convention Preview

LEADING CHANGE

by Louann Reid
Douglas County High School, Castle Rock, Colorado

"Leading Change" is the theme for this year's CEL Convention, to be held at the Galt House in Louisville, Kentucky, November 17–20. Suggestions for educational reform come from every corner of society. As subject matter specialists, how can we use our knowledge to direct reform efforts toward the best education for all students? This is the question around which this year's convention is designed.

This is an appropriate year to focus on change. NCTE has a new convention format, putting CEL and other workshops before the NCTE Annual Convention. This format has led to some exciting changes for the CEL Convention. We will begin with a Tuesday evening social hour and end with a Friday morning continental breakfast. A special added feature this year will be Friday's CEL-sponsored ticketed luncheon, with Grant Wiggins as the keynote speaker.

The Schedule

The conference days retain some of the best features of past conferences while making adjustments for the new format. On Wednesday, registrants may pick up conference materials beginning at 8:00 a.m. We have moved breakfast to 9:00 a.m. to accommodate registration. After breakfast there will be four presentations from which to choose, each 90 minutes long and followed by a 15-minute coffee break. These sessions will be followed by a new event: the Wednesday General Session, featuring Phillip Schlechty (see next section). At that time, candidates running for office will speak and members may vote. After that, there will be a break for lunch on your own. (If you have attended previous CEL or CSSEDC conferences, you may remember this as the time traditionally allotted for touring exhibits. Under the new format, exhibits will not yet be available.) Following lunch, there will be nine more presentations in two one-hour time slots, with another coffee break between. The social hour that evening runs from 6:00 to 7:00.

Thursday's program begins with an 8:00 a.m. breakfast followed by two one-hour time slots for more concurrent sessions. Lunch that day is also followed by two more slots for concurrent sessions. Again, morning and afternoon coffee breaks will be provided. Thursday's social hour is scheduled from 4:15 to 5:15 p.m. so that people who wish to attend section meetings, which begin at 5:00 p.m., may do so.

Friday's continental breakfast is a new feature, running from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. The focus of the breakfast will be roundtable discussions on identified issues and concerns. You may select a table according to the topic you would like to discuss. After that, members of the new CEL commissions will meet. If you are not

on one of the commissions, you will be finished with breakfast in time to attend the first of the NCTE conference sessions.

The General Sessions

Four national leaders will speak at the general sessions. Dr. Cile Chavez, Superintendent of the Littleton (CO) Public Schools, will deliver the keynote address at the Wednesday morning breakfast. Her presentation is entitled "You Want to Transform Whom . . . For What?" Dr. Phillip Schlechty, founder and president of the Center for Leadership in School Reform, will address the group at Wednesday's General Session. He has written *Schools for the 21st Century,* which will also be the topic of his speech. At the Thursday breakfast, Dr. J. Frank Thornton, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Instructional Services, Houston Community College System, will discuss "Managing Change in the Curriculum." At the Thursday luncheon, we will hear from Nancy Lester and Cynthia Onore, authors of *Learning Change: One School District Meets Language Across the Curriculum.* Drs. Lester and Onore will speak on "Leading Learning Change."

The Concurrent Sessions

Workshops on Wednesday and Thursday will focus on transformational leadership, interdisciplinary teaching, response to literature, writing centers, cultural diversity, and leadership roles. Participants may hear about an elementary spelling program, learning styles, successful literature programs, ways to solve impasses, methods for veteran teachers to assist new teachers, techniques for helping at-risk students, young adult books, and portfolios, among other topics of special interest.

The CEL Convention is for everyone interested in leadership in the teaching of English. Participants and presenters—classroom teachers, elementary and secondary supervisors, instructional leaders, curriculum coordinators, department chairs, and college and university professors—come from all levels of education. Be sure to sign up for the CEL Convention (listed as a preconvention workshop) when NCTE registration materials arrive. You may leave renewed, inspired, and perhaps even a little "changed."

Announcements

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS— PLANS FOR FUTURE ISSUES

The *English Leadership Quarterly,* a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary/secondary/college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are welcomed. Software and book reviews related to the themes of the upcoming issues are also encouraged.

Recent surveys of our readers reveal these topics to be of interest: leadership training for the new department chair, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, the tracking/grouping controversy, problems of rural schools, the value of tenure, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

May 1993 (February 1 deadline)
Political Questions: Censorship, Gender, Standards, Certification, Proactive Lobbies, and Legislation

October 1993 (July 1 deadline)
The Other Side of the Desk: Teachers in Other Roles

December 1993 (September 15 deadline)
Case Studies of Chairs
Guest Editor: Henry Kiernan
Southern Regional High School District of Ocean County
Manahawkin, New Jersey 08050 (609-597-9481)

February 1994 (November 1 deadline)
Practical Advice, Strategies, and Suggestions

Manuscripts may be sent on 5.25- or 3.5-inch floppy disks with IBM-compatible ASCII files or as traditional, double-spaced typed copy. Address articles and inquiries to James Strickland, Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly,* English Department, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, 16057-1326 (FAX 412-738-2098).

SPECIAL GUEST-EDITED ISSUE: PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

by Lela M. DeToye
Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

As guest editor for the February 1993 issue, I am issuing a call for manuscripts (November 1 deadline) that look at partnerships which unite English/language arts teachers, parents, and perhaps even the wider community. In particular, I am looking for articles describing success stories in:

- methods to secure parental support (for curriculum changes, detracking efforts, problems dealing with censorship, etc.)
- school/parent contacts
- ways to promote parental involvement and volunteerism
- "back-to-school nights"
- business and industry partnerships with English/language arts departments

Address articles and inquiries to Lela M. DeToye, Assistant Professor, School of Education, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, IL 62026-1122 (618-692-3433).

SEARCH FOR NEW EDITOR FOR CEL's *ENGLISH LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY*

The Conference on English Leadership (CEL) is seeking a new editor for the *English Leadership Quarterly.* In May 1994 the term of the present editor will end. Interested persons should send a letter of application to be received no later than November 2, 1992. Letters should be accompanied by the applicant's vita, one sample of published writing, and two letters of general support from appropriate administrators at the applicant's institution. Do not send books, monographs, or other materials that cannot be easily copied for the Search Committee.

Applicants are urged to hold conversations with administrators on the question of institutional support for the responsibilities of the editorship of this journal. Information about institutional support and about support from CEL can be obtained by calling or writing to Cliff Maduzia, Director of Publication Services, at NCTE (217-328-3870). The applicant appointed by the CEL Executive Committee will effect transition, preparing his or her first issue for publication in October 1994. The initial appointment is for four years and is renewable for an additional three. Applications should be addressed c/o Cliff Maduzia, *English Leadership Quarterly* Search Committee, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

CEL Bylaw Amendment

As noted in the May *English Leadership Quarterly,* the Executive Committee is recommending an amendment to Article X of the CEL Bylaws in order to allow the CEL Executive Committee to determine the dues structure. The rationale for this proposed amendment is that the current bylaws do not allow for prompt response to fiscal concerns requiring action or remedy. Currently, each change in dues structure requires passage of a separate amendment to the CEL Bylaws, which in turn requires affirmation by members present at an annual business meeting or by respondents to a mail ballot sent to the entire CEL membership. Both methods require at least thirty days prior notice to the membership. The proposed change in Article X is needed to allow the CEL Executive Committee to evaluate and adjust the dues structure periodically as economic conditions change.

The immediate need for the proposed amendment is related to the CEL Executive Committee's recommendation that a $5 increase in dues be instituted. The current fee of $10 has not been increased for many years, yet printing costs for *ELQ* and the operating expenses of the organization have escalated.

*****

The CEL Bylaws permit members to vote either by mail or at the business session of the annual fall conference. Each member mailing a ballot should mark it below and mail it in an envelope with a **return name and address** to CEL Mail Ballot, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801. Ballots must reach NCTE **no later than November 2, 1992.** Members who prefer voting at the conference will be given a ballot and an envelope at the business session. An institution with membership in CEL may designate one individual to vote on its behalf. Please list the institution's name and address on the outside of the envelope.

ARTICLE X
DUES

Current Language: The annual dues for membership in CEL will be $10.00 in addition to the dues for membership in NCTE.

Proposed Language: The annual dues structure for membership in CEL will be determined by the CEL Executive Committee. CEL dues will be in addition to membership dues for NCTE.

Change Article X as worded.

_____ Yes
_____ No

CEL Election Slate 1992

CANDIDATES FOR ASSOCIATE CHAIRPERSON (vote for one)

JEFF GOLUB, Assistant Professor of English Education, University of South Florida, Department of Secondary Education, Tampa, FL 33620. **Services to Profession**: Representative-at-Large, NCTE Executive Committee; Member, NCTE's Secondary Section Steering Committee; Member, Commission on Curriculum; Chair, Classroom Practices Committee; Program Chair, 1986 NCTE Spring Regional Conference in Phoenix. **Professional Contributions and Honors**: Editor, *Activities to Promote Critical Thinking* and *Focus on Collaborative Learning,* both published by NCTE; Editor, "Computers in the Classroom" column and "JH/MS Idea Factory" column in *English Journal;* State Farm "Good Neighbor" Award for innovative teaching (September 1991); *English Journal*'s Writing Award for the best article published in the journal by a high school teacher during the 1988–89 school year; invited to attend the July 1987 English Coalition Conference in Maryland along with 60 other educators at all levels of instruction throughout the country.

Position Statement: This is a good time to be an English teacher: we are moving toward an "interactive" approach to classroom instruction in which the students participate in their own learning and the teacher serves as designer, director, and decision-maker. Through its leaders and newsletters and conference programs, CEL offers English teachers outstanding vision and insights into this instructional change and improvement. Having taught English at both the junior and senior high school levels for 20 years, I want to contribute to this necessary, worthwhile, and visionary effort.

DONALD L. STEPHAN, English Department Chair and Teacher, Sidney High School, 1215 Campbell Road, Sidney, OH 45365. **Services to Profession**: Member, CSSEDC Executive Board (1985–88); President of Western Ohio Council of Teachers of English (1990–91); currently Past President of WOCTELA, Legislative Representative for WOCTELA. **Professional Contributions and Honors**: Sidney Education Association's Teacher of the Year (1984); Chairperson of Ohio Education Association Professional and Instructional Commission; Co-author of three Center for Learning texts.

Position Statement: In this time of public criticism of education, educational leaders need groups like CEL for support and guidance. By sharing at our annual conferences and through our quarterly, we become stronger and more effective leaders. As chairperson, I would continue to provide the nurturing and building for which CEL is known and prized.

CANDIDATES FOR MEMBERS-AT-LARGE (vote for two)

RICK CHAMBERS, Head of English, Grand River Collegiate Institute, Waterloo County Board of Education, 175 Indian Road, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2B 2S7. **Services to Profession**: Presenter, CSSEDC Conference, St. Louis (November 1988), NCTE Annual Convention and CEL Conference, Seattle (November 1991); Member, CEL Social Committee (1991); Member, National Writing Center Association (1991). **Professional Contributions and Honors**: "The Business of Television," *English Leadership Quarterly* (December 1991); Languages and Arts Department Head, Centre Dufferin District High School (1977–88); English Department Head, Canadian Forces Schools Overseas, Lahr, Germany (1981–84); English Department Head, Grand River Collegiate (1989–present); Ontario Ministry of Education Pilot Project Coordinator, The Writing Centre at Grand River Collegiate (1991–92); Co-author, *Oral Language: Listening and Speaking,* Waterloo County Board of Education.

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Position Statement: CEL provides a forum for leaders in English to discover those strategies, materials, and ideas that will help our students become literate and informed citizens. CEL also provides a support network for us when we urge the teachers with whom we work to experiment with the new strategies, sample the new materials, and learn the new ideas that will help their students. The most extraordinary thing about CEL, though, is its members' capacity to discuss in an open and unpretentious way their concerns, solutions, innovations, and alternatives to problems with which we all contend. I have enjoyed every minute of my involvement in CEL (CSSEDC) and would be pleased and honored, as a member-at-large, to lend my service to this organization which has helped me so much.

LELA M. DeTOYE, Assistant Professor, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Box 1122, Edwardsville, IL 62026. **Services to Profession**: Chair, Elementary Section, IATE (1985–present); Co-chair, Local Arrangements Committee, IATE Conference, St. Louis (October 1991); NCATE Folio Reviewer for English/Language Arts Teacher Education Programs (1988–present); NCTE/CEE Commission on the Transition to Teaching (1988–91); NCTE Committee on Tracking and Grouping Practices (1991); Local Arrangements Committee, NCTE Annual Convention, St. Louis (November 1988); Member, ASCD, IRA, Illinois Reading Council, and Phi Delta Kappa. **Professional Contributions and Honors**: "The English Coalition Conference: Focusing School Reform on the English Language Arts," *Illinois Principal;* "Writing a Student Profile," in the 26th volume of NCTE's Classroom Practices Series, titled *It Works;* "Artifacts of Memory: Linking the Generations," a chapter for a proposed IRA publication titled *Closing the Circle: Using Story to Connect School, Home and Community;* guest editor, *English Leadership Quarterly* (February 1993); "A Strategy for Integrating the Assessment of Science and Writing," *Spectrum,* the quarterly publication of the Illinois Science Teachers Association (Fall 1991); three articles in *Illinois English Bulletin.*

Position Statement: If your organization was still called CSSEDC, I could not be a candidate for member-at-large. I am not now, nor have I ever been, an English department chairperson in a secondary school. I do, however, consider myself a leader in the area of English/language arts. I direct a National Writing project site at SIUE; I conduct hours of inservice on composition for practicing teachers; and I teach language art methods courses for preparing teachers. I have served and continue to serve on NCTE committees and commissions that have considerable influence on the direction of English/language arts education in this country.

As CEL broadens its membership to include leaders other than secondary school English department chairpersons, its governing and planning bodies should also reflect this more inclusive scope.

LOUANN REID, English Department Chair, Douglas County High School, 2842 Front Street, Castle Rock, CO 80104. **Services to Profession**: Program Chair, CEL Conference, Louisville (1992); First Vice-President (1991–92) and President (1992–93), Colorado Language Arts Society; Chair, CLAS Regional Conference (1991); Local Arrangements Committee, NCTE Spring Conference, Colorado Springs (1990); NCTE Committee on Classroom Practices (1989–92); Registration, NCTE Annual Convention, Los Angeles (1987), Cincinnnati (1980). **Professional Contributions and Honors**: "An Interactive Approach to Composition Instruction," with Jeff Golub, *Composition & Resistance,* ed. C. Mark Hurlbert and Michael Blitz (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1991); "Activities for an Interactive Classroom," with Jeff Golub, *English Journal* 78.4 (April 1989)—winner of 1989 *EJ* Award for best article by a high school teacher; "Physical Poetry," *IDEAS Plus* 7 (Urbana, IL: NCTE); "'You See Their Interselves': Small Group Discussion of Poetry," *Talking to Learn,* Classroom Practices in Teaching English, Vol. 24 (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1989); "Critical Thinking in Response to Literature," *Arizona English Bulletin* 30.1 (Fall 1987); "The Roundtable: How Do You Provide for the Effective Use of Small Groups?" *English Journal* 76.6 (October 1987); numerous conference presentations.

Position Statement: Leaders need vision, vitality, and an organization that supports them. CEL supports English/language arts leaders through conference programs, member networks, and quarterly publication. Nikos Kazantzakis described my vision of a leader: "Ideal teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross, then having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own." Isn't this exactly what a good leader does?

As a member-at-large, I would like to support and augment the work of CEL in building bridges for English/language arts leaders. I want to promote increased CEL membership—especially among groups currently underrepresented—increased participation in CEL's programs and projects, and the continued vitality of an organization that has helped me cross the bridge from classroom teacher to classroom leader.

DON SHAFER, Department Chair, Fairview High School, 4507 West 213th Street, Fairview Park, OH 44136. **Services to Profession**: Presented and served on a panel on the subject of mentoring and teacher training (1991); served as hospitality person at the NCTE Annual Convention in Atlanta (1990); presented "Through the Mentoring Maze" at the NCTE Annual Convention in Baltimore (1989); presented a workshop on peer evaluation and the writing process for state organization (1986). **Professional Contributions and Honors**: Wrote and edited a study guide for NBC about Lake Erie; wrote "Hawthorne and the Creative Process," published in a college paper; wrote three chapters in a textbook on aging. (I teach in a school district in which all honors have been given to the principal—not a cynical comment, just a truthful one.)

Position Statement: Leadership must be proactive—not reactive. There are mandates for testing that politicians are forcing schools to implement that have a direct effect on the English curriculum. Testing is one mandate. I believe chairpersons must get involved and find ways to convince schools and politicians that a true measure of learning is not a state or national test. As a member-at-large, I will tirelessly work to listen to member concerns about the direction of CEL. Also, I will assist in developing strategies to communicate with politicians and others, to convince them that testing of students is not the only measure of student learning.

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BALLOT INSTRUCTIONS

The CEL Bylaws permit members to vote either by mail or at the business session of the annual fall conference. Each member mailing a ballot should mark it and mail it in an envelope with a **return name and address** to Doug Estell, 520 East Main Street, Carmel, IN 46032. Please mark "Ballot" on the outside of the envelope. Ballots must be postmarked **no later than November 1, 1992.** Members who prefer voting at the conference will be given a ballot and an envelope at the business session. An institution with membership may designate one individual to vote on its behalf. Please list the institution name and address on the outside of the envelope.

CEL ELECTION SLATE 1992

Associate Chairperson (vote for one)

* alphabetical order

_____ Jeff Golub
_____ Donald L. Stephan
_____ _____
(write-in candidate)

Members-at-Large (vote for two)

* alphabetical order

_____ Rick Chambers
_____ Lela M. DeToye
_____ Louann Reid
_____ Don Shafer
_____ _____
(write-in candidate)

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ENGLISH LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY

Conference on English Leadership

Volume 14, Number 4
December 1992
Editor: James Strickland

In This Issue

ALTERNATIVES

by James Strickland, editor

We all like alternatives. Ask, "How about Chinese tonight?" and the inevitable reply is, "What are the alternatives?" We may end up ordering the Moo Goo Gai Pan, but then again we might go for the tacos once someone else suggests Mexican; we like to know that we have choices.

The other day I read a newspaper story about some millionaire's proposal for an alternative to traditional American public school education. The alternative for-profit school would feature an 8-hour day, structured peer-learning groups, electronic multimedia tutoring, a program of at-school jobs to teach responsibility and skills, and at least an hour of physical activity a day. Those are alternatives worth considering. Of course, whenever we are given alternatives, we immediately imagine why they wouldn't and couldn't work and what the hidden agenda is behind each alternative being proposed. Still, we like to have choices to consider.

Not all alternatives are good. Consider my friend's reply when I asked about her daughter's prom date. "Oh, he's one of those alternative people," she said. "Oh?" I responded, looking down at my shoes while trying to figure out what that meant. "Half his head is shaved, and the rest of his long hair is in a ponytail; he always wears black, including black fingernail polish; and, they never go anywhere," she elaborated helpfully.

"Oh, alternative people—probably the same ones who buy that alternative music in the record store, huh?" I added, trying to clarify the concept for myself.

I guess alternatives are simply different ways of doing what we already do, choices that we're not sure we want yet, but we're glad to know we have them nevertheless. I may not be ready for black nail polish or electronic CD-ROM/ Video/Fax/Computer learning systems, but I'm in favor of having the options. The exciting thing about options is they give me someone else's perspective, a view I wouldn't be able to take otherwise.

The authors in this issue of the *Quarterly* offer various spins or twists on the way we do things. Kathleen Blake Yancey and Boyd Davis, both from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, offer an alternative to inservice programs—a three-week-long intensive institute for elementary teachers. The subject of their institute is computer-mediated learning, but what they share with us can be applied to any environment supporting teaching and learning in community. Kathleen's an advocate of alternatives, having recently edited *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom,* a collection promoting portfolios as an alternative method of assessing student writing, published by NCTE.

Mike Tebo, a secondary classroom teacher active in the Southern Mississippi Writing Project, has developed an alternative to writing as a mode of thinking; he calls it "Writing: Therapy Without the Therapist." Mike shares the therapeutic benefits of writing about emotionally charged topics. His students at Hattiesburg High School in Mississippi write about teenage suicide, but Mike feels that the topic and the assignments can be tailored to any subject.

Rob Perrin, a composition and rhetoric specialist at Indiana State University, offers alternative ways of thinking about how

(continued on page 2)

Inside . . . **page number**

Learning and Teaching in Community 2
by Kathleen Blake Yancey and Boyd Davis
Writing: Therapy Without the Therapist 6
by Mike Tebo
Metaphors from the Arts:
Rethinking Contexts for Writing 9
by Rob Perrin
New Beginnings for Change 10
by Susan Benjamin and Jane Gard
When the Students Create the Questions 11
by Joy Marks Gray
Book Review: Thomas J. Sergiovanni, *Value-Added Leadership: How to Get Extraordinary Performance in Schools,* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990. 13
by Alyce Hunter
Software Review: "Harper Reading Software" 14
by Wendy Paterson
Calls for Manuscripts 14
Announcements 15
CEL Election Results 16

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we teach writing. Rob offers metaphors for writing that he has drawn from the performance arts—painting, sculpture, dance, and theatre.

Susan Benjamin, an active member of the Executive Committee of the Conference on English Leadership, has pushed collaborative writing to the extreme by co-authoring an article with Jane Gard, her principal at Highland Park High School in Illinois. Together they tell us their alternative vision for how things are done at Highland Park; they were able to make new beginnings set the tone for a whole year of change.

Joy Marks Gray, English Department chair and classroom teacher at Gilmour Academy in Gates Mills, Ohio, had a crazy idea for the final examination in her A.P. English class, along the lines of "what if the patients ran the asylum." Joy decided to let the students write their own exam questions, and when you read the questions they devised, you'll wonder why we didn't think of it first.

Alyce Hunter, Director of Language Arts, Reading, and Media at Franklin Township Public Schools, Somerset, New Jersey, reviews the educational alternatives suggested by Thomas J. Sergiovanni in his new book, *Value-Added Leadership: How to Get Extraordinary Performance in Schools,* published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Wendy Paterson, our software reviewer from Buffalo State College, describes a new program known simply as "Harper Reading Software." The reading/writing software was created to accompany Kathleen McWhorter's trio of reading and study skills textbooks.

LEARNING AND TEACHING IN COMMUNITY

by Kathleen Blake Yancey and Boyd Davis
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

What follows is our account of team-teaching a summer institute for teachers, "Using the Computer to Teach Reading and Writing," the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's first offering of this kind: what we expected, how we planned, what we think actually happened, what we and our participants learned. In the telling of this story, however, is the telling of other stories and themes as well, of how education and training differ, of how readiness must be fostered if development is a goal, of how logistics can divert but not subvert teaching and learning, of how teachers learn from and with each other, and of how computers—when accessible to all—can enhance both community and communication.

Expectations: Kathleen Yancey

When asked to team-teach in the program that focused on teaching in a computer-mediated classroom, I was both flattered and flabbergasted. I had never taught in a computer classroom before (Boyd Davis had); I do not consider myself a reading specialist, and while I can use a word processor, I was neither technically proficient nor terribly knowledgeable about computers. I understood how working with a computer had changed my own writing, transforming my sense of being "a-person-who-writes" to being "a writer." I also knew—and know—that computers are changing the way we conduct business, the business we conduct, and the world we know.

I accepted the teaching offer with serious reservations. For one thing, while I like to think of myself as a good teacher, I was troubled by the fact that I would be attempting this new way of teaching in front of students who were teachers themselves, along with a colleague, Boyd Davis. Simply put, I felt vulnerable. There was also a larger issue—change. As much as I say I like change, I am not sure about this potential change, particularly because I couldn't see what shape it might take, what work it would require, what new dissatisfactions it might generate. I knew that learning to teach—and to learn—within this new setting and with this new technology could profoundly change my other teaching, could make me see the "old" teaching as inadequate, could motivate me to bring it into a new focus. I did realize, though, that these concerns probably made me much like the participants I would be teaching, and that this similarity might be useful.

I said yes for two reasons, really. First, I wanted to try team-teaching in a course. I have worked collaboratively in several settings—on books, in workshops, as a consultant—but I'd never team-taught a course before. Second, I was curious: the institute's intent was to help teachers use the computer to teach children to read and write. I wanted to learn how we could use the computer to teach reading and writing. I also thought that I would provide a good model for our participants: well-intentioned but not knowledgeable; interested but anxious; simultaneously wanting to know and afraid to find out. I was, in fact, so much like the participants that I experienced some difficulty in conceptualizing, even visualizing, how this class would go or what it would look like. I sensed that they would know about reading and the teaching of reading but very little about writing and the teaching of writing; I sensed that they would be good teachers. For the rest, I trusted my colleague, Boyd Davis.

Expectations: Boyd Davis

Because we were going to be presenting this institute in a computer lab at a nearby elementary school, I expected some things about facilities and support. I expected the lab, which had been running for several years, to match the labs I had seen on TV or over in our university's engineering building: terminals or microcomputers that worked, with a nearby technical assistant; software; tables, chairs, 'pods' or clusters of computers, with one computer per person; one or more printers; stacks of paper; air conditioning; a fileserver that would act in many ways like the mainframes for which I'd learned to construct computer conferences—a traffic system, with me or Kathleen as the router.

This lab, however, defied my expectations. Since the elementary school had no money in last year's budget for software and supplies (including paper and printer ribbon), the computers were set up to allow only the teacher—or someone designated by the teacher—to print. There was no documentation, no technical assistant, and very little software. The teacher who had taken over the lab-director position at the elementary school came in from her vacation to show us an intriguing network setup that made the best of what there was. She had successfully networked a set of

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old but still serviceable microcomputers to a fileserver, a newer upgraded model in the same computer family.

But we had to reinvent her wheel. I do not know why I expected anything else, but I did. I had expected that some of the computers would not work, and that I would have some problems adjusting to the setup and to a family of micros I do not usually use. I did not expect the system to be counter-intuitive, backwards from other systems I had worked with.

Only some of the software worked; only a few of the routing commands worked; software and routing commands were not always friendly to each other. Usually, they ate each other. I recognized that while I had the concept for the network, and experience with a number of design models for computer-assisted or computer- supported and even computer-mediated assignments and classrooms, I did not know enough about the particular model dedicated to being a fileserver to fix it if I broke it, so I was pretty anxious. I had one more seemingly small concern: The lab had tiny chairs that were fine for children, but uncomfortable for the grown-ups who would soon be sitting in them.

I also had some specific expectations about the participants. Teachers in our state must upgrade their certification every five years with the equivalent of six credits, obtained either by in-service courses or by courses for academic credit. Because this course would present three hours of either to those who completed the course satisfactorily, and because it would take place within three weeks, the time frame for the course would be an inviting aspect to busy teachers. Although the teachers could come from anywhere in the region, I assumed that most would come from our local school system, would have varying degrees of expertise, represent any or all of the 13 grades (K–12), teach in any content area, and some would have been encouraged or strongly pushed to take the course by their principals or curriculum supervisors. I assumed they would want more practice than theory, and I assumed that we would probably all like each other.

Furthermore, I assumed that those with the least hands-on experience with using computers in their schools or classrooms would come with the expectation that using computers means finding the "right piece of software that would do the job." Now, this is not an unworthy notion. After all, the computer-as-toaster school of thought says that a computer is only a box to operate the software you want to run. By and large, that is true, but it is not that simple: you have to know what you want the software to do before you select it.

The computer, even when it is just a toaster, is still magical, even for those who use it for word processing or for managing grade books and financial records or for playing educational games. There is something simply marvelous about not having to use an eraser. There's something magical about seeing words printed instead of scrawled.

Because the class was being taught at an elementary school instead of on campus, I expected the participants to assume that this course was going to be a workshop course as opposed to a graduate seminar (which in our region assigns no "homework," is often a make-it and take-it event, with emphasis on practice rather than on theory, and uses the instructor as a stand-up trainer). We had been told to develop a graduate seminar. I was worried about this.

The Students: Boyd Davis and Kathleen Yancey

The major components of the course seemed obvious, given the course title, "Using the Computer to Teach Reading and Writing." We began with computers, reading, writing, and teaching as our focus, driven by our commitment to human communication, human interaction, human community. We were not especially interested in surveying software, although that has a place, and we were not particularly interested in the hardware, though you have to know enough to ask the right questions. We were interested in how computers can aid learners in reading and writing, in how teachers can design tasks that promote this kind of learning, in how networks enable a new kind of community, in what Cindy Selfe calls "layered literacy." More or less, that's what we *thought* we wanted.

As good teachers, we wanted to tailor the course to the students and their needs, so we asked them, by way of a letter sent before the course began, to share with us their goals in taking the course and the questions they wanted the course to address, as well as any other information they thought pertinent.

As a first-time offering for UNC Charlotte, the population it would attract was not immediately obvious. Would mostly secondary school English teachers sign up? Or would local elementary school teachers see the course as a way to fulfill a school system mandate to "acquire" computer literacy? We found that at least half the participants would be from outside the local system, that two would be teachers from a nearby community college, and that over half were elementary teachers who were looking for something that would increase the skills of their low-performance and ESL students. Telephone calls from three participants indicated real pressure from principals; another three expressed a concern to adapt the course to fulfill a requirement for the TESOL sequence of certification courses. We discovered that many had never written on a computer. We knew that at least one was a graduate student in our program who had plans for continuing elsewhere for a doctorate, and we heard unofficially that most of the other graduate students in our program who inquired about the course had been told that it was specifically directed to public school classroom teachers. Two more who called were hoping that the course would be a hands-on training in how to use specific software packages; they did not sign up for the course, fortunately.

Not surprisingly, the participants' goals were diverse; they wanted to learn about which software they should buy, about how to apply the computer in the classroom, about record-keeping on the computer, and—indeed—about how to *use* the computer. Early on, then, this diversity in goals and in preparedness struck a theme, one that resonated throughout the course and after.

Course Design: Kathleen Yancey

In response to the multiple goals and needs expressed by our participants and to the goals we had identified, we designed a course divided into three weeks. The first week focused on writing-process pedagogy, including invention, drafting, and response to writing. The second week focused on reading, including reader response and whole language, using texts like *Cinderella* (variously by Walt Disney, Roald Dahl, and Anne Sexton) and *The Secret Garden.* The third week focused on using the computer in an integral way to help writers write, readers read, and learners show what they have learned, the last through portfolios in hard copy.

Since each "class day" was three hours long, we decided to divide the day into hour blocks, with equal time spent on reading, writing, and curricular design, and with modes of activity varying from individual work—such as responding to prompts—to partner and small-group work—such as student design of computer-based curricular applications—to whole-class activities—such as presentation and discussions. Tucked into some of the days were "other" topics: a software review and critique; a presentation of equipment a computer classroom might require so the participants

could ask informed questions about cables and monitors and telephone lines; a demonstrated network journey through e-mail, Internet, and KidsNet; some brief information about portfolios and their uses.

We were planning for our participants to learn a great deal in a short amount of time. It was therefore crucial that we not let them get lost or overwhelmed. Accordingly, we decided to "frame" each class so that each day would start and end consistently. To begin each day, the participants arrived, turned on their terminals, and called up and responded to a writing prompt that was waiting for them. Sometimes this prompt asked the participants to elaborate on work done in class; sometimes it asked them to write new prompts for their colleagues; sometimes it invited them to reflect on their own educational experiences and to link those to their teaching. In addition to providing a necessary kind of redundancy and a dependable structure, this daily start-up activity ensured that our participants did what we wanted their students to do: read on the computer, write on the computer, use the computer to learn and to share, routinely, increasingly "naturally." Likewise, each day ended the same way—with our coming together, sharing and reviewing what we had done, and forecasting the next.

This, then, was the basic design. We knew it would need to be flexible, so we had time built in that was not previously accounted for, time that could be dedicated as necessary. In all, we were satisfied that this design would serve our students' needs.

What Happened: Kathleen Yancey

We all know the story about the best laid plans: some work, some do not. For this teachers' institute, when our plans worked, they worked well. The daily writing prompts, for instance, provided the structural and semantic coherence we had hoped for. Participants initiated the class themselves, they made connections between teaching and learning we could not have anticipated, and they became proficient and even excited users of the computer. Indeed, they became designers of the prompts, articulating guidelines for prompts that I use today.

But let me put the story of the other plans in the context of the first day. After completing several introductory exercises before turning on the machines, the participants were to boot up the computers, find a writing prompt, and follow the directions outlined there, which basically followed the sequence of writing to the prompt, saving it to the disk, and sending it on to the instructors. This would have been a wonderful exercise—if the prompt had been there. It was not. (It is still in virtual reality, but we lost its address.) Fortunately, we had a back-up of the prompt on disk; we called it up and sent it out, illustrating how not to get flustered when the hardware has a mind of its own. The notion of a failsafe system—one that has back-ups, one in which we believe we can handle the hardware dysfunctions, one that thrives on a sense of humor and a sense of perspective—was embodied right from the start. With that accomplished, we could get on to the real agenda: learning. And what did the participants learn?

- They learned to write on the computer. Some already knew how to do this, so they learned not just to input but to compose at the keyboard, to move back and forth from hard-copy notes to the screen. Others were writing at the keyboard for the first time.
- They learned about writing processes and writing pedagogy. They talked about and experimented with various forms of invention (brainstorming, looping, freewriting, cubing), drafted various pieces, shared those pieces with peers, revised them, and carried them to publication.
- All of the participants learned about ways of reading, about multiple interpretations of a single text, about ways to link visuals and performance with reading. They read different kinds of texts, in the context of Louise Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic readings, and they linked affect, reading, cognition, curriculum, and assessment.
- All of the participants began to learn how to create prompts on the screen: the ways the prompts can be used to reinforce and extend curriculum; the kinds of formats that make such prompts readable; the kinds of directions that guide students appropriately.
- All of the participants began to learn about portfolios, about sets of materials, about their ability to show development, about their connection to authentic assessment.
- Several of the participants were ready at the conclusion of the course to try connecting their students to students in other schools and other worlds and, in fact, built that component into their curriculum designs.

What Happened: Boyd Davis

We did not use half of what we had originally prepared; I like having more to offer, in that there is a depth and a resonance as well as an ability to answer and refocus all kinds of questions coming from every angle. It was interesting that during the first few days of the class, Kathleen took on the technical role while I handled the chalk-and-talk, a necessity if we were both to be able to do either. By the third day, either one of us could have taken over the other's part (always a test of a successful team). At the end, Kathleen wanted to include next time the topics I had originally proposed but we had left out (for example, multimedia and hypertext), and I wanted to include next time the topics she had wanted to include (more theory on writing and reading).

We both wanted the teachers to work with writing and reading from a theory-based stance, so that if a particular project they developed turned out to be unsuitable down the road, they could design new ones. The teachers became aware of their own processes of interpreting and creating texts, and began to develop a range of techniques for doing both. We also wanted them to experience some of the exhilaration that comes with learning something new and difficult, and they did. They learned that the parallel electronic universe that was busily developing itself had room for them, and they were welcome.

What We Missed: Kathleen Yancey and Boyd Davis

During the time that an adult professional is deciding to start using computers, edging up to them over three or four years, learning something about them and some ways to use them, their students have been happily using them and going way beyond what anyone expected them to be able to do. Our design for the course had to include not only our assessment of the participating teachers, but also some consideration for what their students could or might do, abilities that the teachers might not recognize or realize. We never really got to know the teachers' students very well, and we now think that was a design flaw. We did not give them a way to go back and find out what their students already knew. However, this came out a little in the kinds of prompts they designed and in the kinds of portfolios they began to see as possible. We are not sure this was a question any of them had asked themselves, and since they (like us) were so concerned in learning for themselves, the ultimate users were left out. We needed to spend more time on integrating the computer into the learning that the teachers were designing. At the conclusion of the institute, each one, individu-

ally or in teams, presented a project. Generally, the projects were quite good, and clearly the participants had learned much about reading and writing and about word processing for themselves. It was not always clear, however, how much the participants had learned about making the computer an integral part of their students' learning.

Another design flaw was including the portfolio as an assessment measure without including as well more reading in and work with various kinds of portfolios. We saw this too late, when the participants turned in their portfolios. Some were excellent, all were the products of considerable thought and development, but several were collections without reflection or a focus appropriate for the individual learner or for the class.

Immediate and Long-Term Benefits: Kathleen Yancey

I had wanted to learn how to teach reading and writing using the computer; I did. I wanted to team-teach, and I liked it. In the process of both, I experienced everything I anticipated I would—feelings of fear, vulnerability, inadequacy, confidence, excitement—and they were all fine. I learned.

I will, I hope, team-teach this course again, and better the next time around. In the meantime, I know that my initial fears about the impact of the institute were justified; my teaching is changing. This term, for instance, I am using VAX conferences in my methods class so that my prospective colleagues will be more prepared than I to undertake this challenge. I am also trying to establish computer conferences between these prospective teachers and high school students two counties away taught by a colleague from this summer's institute. Boyd and I are hoping to develop two such institutes for next summer, one for the novice, one for those who want to explore further.

I am, in a word, changed. I have moved from being a consumer of technology, and from working very hard to ignore it, excluding it from my teaching and learning, to being a producer, thinking about how it can be included, about how courses integrating technology can be designed, and about appropriate kinds of assessment. In addition, I am beginning to explore other, related topics: Is electronic discourse "different" than hard copy? How so? Are the rhetorical conventions the same? And what might this mean for the teaching of writing and reading? In sum, this experience has opened up several new areas of inquiry for me—as well as for my students.

Benefits: A Reflection: Boyd Davis

My assessment of benefits is likely to differ from Kathleen's in certain respects, partly because I had been working with some applications of computer-supported teaching previously. I have several concerns. One is accessibility: using computer-supported techniques and methods, particularly online mainframe applications and multimedia, is not always possible for a K–12 teacher. I thought about accessibility as I designed a workshop for the teachers at my son's school. How dare I, for example, mutter to myself about working in a school lab that did not have the latest equipment and was not backed up with a support person who was more technologically literate than I? My own campus did not have an "extra" classroom-lab that it could make available for us and the participants to use for four uninterrupted hours each day. While I might have felt momentarily marginalized because I was not surrounded by backup support and equipment, our participants did not. The teachers in our class became more aware, I think, of several issues.

Imperviousness. Computer-supported writing and reading can be seductive and it can be intimidating: the teacher's task is to navigate between Scylla and Charybdis, so that the technology becomes the means, not the end, to the learning. This is not a new concern, as studies of early literacy in a variety of cultures suggest that any introduction of a new literacy is accompanied by this issue. You have to work steadily with computers to both lose fear and resist entrancement. The teachers in our class did, I think, become less intimidated by the physical acts of keyboarding, managing disks, printing, and shifting directories. They did, I think, become impervious to the seduction of the bells and whistles, the smoke and mirrors, and the color monitors. They became aware that designing prompts, assignments, and conversation-starters had to move in different ways, and they did, I think, become more sophisticated in evaluating software, seeing it no longer as a quick fix in a triage setting.

Marginalization. If there is only one lab, or only one printer, or only one computer, how do we make it possible for everyone in our class to have access to it? What kinds of assignments and curriculum do we move to develop so that all of our students can learn, too, to steer between Scylla and Charybdis? What ways can we use to insist that our class, any class, and every class have this access? By way of parallel example, if we reserve literature for the "gifted," what are we doing? If we reserve our definition of literature for that which comes in a shiny new shrink-wrapped text for the "advanced" class, what are we doing? Kathleen and I, sitting in the small chairs in our classroom, working with twenty-three students, thought about this issue. It lay there, undiscussed, and surfaced in the prompts our teacher-participants designed for each other and for their students "back home." We did not need to discuss this one. We just needed to remind everyone it was there, it was not going away, and we would not even want it to.

Intrusiveness. With the issues of imperviousness and marginalization comes a third concern about designing ways to use the computer that are not punitive, snoopy, invasive, or intrusive. This lovely new tool, like anything else, can be misused. We should look at the ways we use it, for example, the prompts for student journals or for expressive writing. Those become broadcast on a network, and we cannot hide a message that should not have been sent to everyone. I remember "slam books": we passed them around in our classes, writing furiously in our subterranean existence of grades six through nine while my teachers talked about how we could not write. Each year, some authority (how strange to think that I am one now) intercepted a "slam book" and forbade their existence. We were lucky when that official did not read aloud from it. The experienced authority knew better, the inexperienced ones did not. Our teacher-participants did, I think, become aware of the ways computers could promote intimacy and of the need to develop assignments that prevent what I am calling intrusiveness.

A final distinction needs to be made between training and educating. Training, in my mind, resembles the detached and deranged brain-machine that controls and controls and controls for its own ends in Madeleine L'Engle's *Wrinkle in Time*. Education can slide over into that scenario of control, particularly when we let ourselves be distracted. We must have been involved with education, because instead of easy answers we came up with new sets of questions. I shared some of those questions, which came from the participants in our class, with the teachers at my son's school. These questions involved access and management, opportunity and concerns. I found the questions reshaping the prompts I had promised to deliver, prompts keyed to the texts used by my son's teachers. I find them reshaping my preliminary experiments with multimedia applications. I am not who I was, either.

Some Final Thoughts: Kathleen Yancey

What we learned with our participants is mostly what we already knew: that there are a variety of ways to use the computer, to work together as we do so, to continue our work together through using the computer; that building readiness in teachers is a large part of that process; that learning to work in a computer-enhanced environment is like other kinds of learning, infused with the same frustrations and the same joys; that if only because of issues of access, this learning and teaching is political. We also learned that to stay alive, we—like our students—must take risks, must risk the chance of failure in order to experience success.

But the story that began last spring and went into summer is still being told, its themes resonating in multiple variations. Not long after the fall term began, my colleague—the high school teacher two counties north of us—and I discovered what perhaps we should already have known: I am on one network (BITNET), she is on another (FRedNET), and the two do not "talk" to each other. Without a network connection, the students in our electronic response project cannot talk on-line to each other. So once again, we are adapting to the technology, her students each saving their work on disk, my methods students reading and commenting on the disk and then returning it to the high school writer for additional work. In short, it feels just like last summer: while the technology is not yet helping us as it should, we are incorporating it as we can. And the methods students in this electronic response project? They are every bit as nervous as I was; they will be responding to real students in a new medium that most of them do not control yet. They will learn, as I did.

I was reminded recently that another generation of students is ready to help us all learn about, and learn to use, this new technology. I saw some of them yesterday, when I visited my daughter's sixth-grade class to do a short writing workshop—nothing electronic, just the pencil and paper variety. At the conclusion of the visit, I casually mentioned how much fun it would be to read the writings we had just heard the students share. Immediately, one student volunteered to take the writings home, edit them with her PrintShop and Companion software, and bring her "galleys" back to class so that her colleagues could copyedit their writings. Another suggested that once completed, this class "newsletter" could be inserted into another one—the monthly PTA newsletter—and sent home. Without warning, an editorial board was being formed and a newsletter created, one that could invigorate the curriculum as it linked student to student and school to home—if the teacher and I would just get out of the way.

This idea, of helping learners develop readiness and then providing them support while we get out of the way, is one I have heard about before, most recently from Geoff Hewitt of Vermont. His advice about how to develop portfolios is good advice for those of us interested in computers and community: set important goals, provide resources and support, get out of the way, and prepare—teachers and students—to learn in the process. I can think of no more powerful way of inviting "them" to join "us."

WRITING: THERAPY WITHOUT THE THERAPIST

by Mike Tebo
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Writing is not the solution to young people's problems; however, it can become an avenue to coping with problems. Can there be writing therapy in the classroom? My answer is a resounding "yes!" but only after careful consideration and planning by the writing teacher. I have seen journal and freewriting turn into "satin pillows" for students to cry on. Writing conducted through structured, goal-oriented assignments can be a valuable tool for self-therapy. For this to happen, teachers must go beyond the traditional, beginning-middle-and-end, five-paragraph essay on "The Dangers of Drugs" or "Abortion" and into structured, focused assignments that are relevant to student writers. The process and product of such a lesson could give direction to young writers who might be struggling with a conflict.

Donald Murray (1985) states, "My students don't have just writing problems—they have people problems." (*A Writer Teaches Writing*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p. 217). My students and those of other teachers are no different. In fact, a former student's essay, written several years ago, was the catalyst that brought me to seriously consider using writing for therapy in addition to journal writing experiences. Her experience with a close friend who had committed suicide was vividly expressed in her essay. There were unanswerable questions, speculation, and an outpouring of frustrations. I think most will agree that the ultimate worth of any writing is the effect it has on the reader; yet with therapy writing, the piece affects the writer as well. My student's paper affected me, and from her own admission, writing about the tragedy helped her.

From this experience, I felt compelled to design a series of writing assignments, to be used on a regular, structured basis, which confront an issue for therapy writing. Not every teacher agrees with or is comfortable with students probing into personal and often controversial areas, but there are different degrees of therapy writing. Of course, the list of topics is endless and can address any number of serious matters. I chose the issue of suicide among young people. Perhaps I go to the extreme, but I see a concern that I feel needs to be addressed by my students. The Result? A series of varying types of writing assignments, varying degrees of difficulty, even the option to not participate if a student and/or their parents feel uncomfortable with the topic. I am not advocating that we all write about teenage suicide, I am suggesting therapy writing as a successful stimulus for good writing.

The Assignments

I begin the series of assignments with a general introduction to the notion of therapy writing. Here is the first handout the students receive:

"We will do a series of writing assignments related to the topic of teenage suicide. Throughout this unit we will attempt to focus on the attitudes of those who commit suicide, the reasons behind the act of suicide, what might be done to prevent suicide, and how we could help someone thinking of such an act. In general, I hope we become more aware of this problem among people your age.

"Statistics show that suicide is one of the leading causes of death among your age group. Over the last fifteen years (since I was last a teenager), the suicide rate for your age group has risen over 400% (according to a speech by Kyle Rote, Jr., to the Laurel Mayor's prayer breakfast in March 1988). Five suicides and five hundred attempts occur each day (according to a report by the Menninger clinic of Albuquerque in *Ladies Home Journal*, November 1987).

"Hopefully through writing about such a current problem facing your peers, we can realize the seriousness of the problem, the finality of such an act and perhaps find answers to the question of why someone would commit suicide."

Following a review of the handout, I ask the students to freewrite about suicide for ten minutes. I ask them to be very honest and personal. When they are finished, I direct them to store the freewriting in their folders, where they will keep all drafts and freewritings.

Assignment #1 has two parts: the group activity and an individual activity. The groups are directed to allow enough time for all members to read a newspaper article, "Young Suicide Victim Leaves Philosophical Note to Parents." The following is the actual suicide note left by an unidentified young man as it was reported in the newspaper account:

> You [the authorities] are bound to preserve domestic peace and order. If you pursue who I was (and spend hundreds of dollars), you will accomplish little. There are no legal consequences of my death or any kind of entanglements. All that can happen is that you will shatter the domestic peace and order of two innocent lives. Do not deprive them of the hope that their 'missing' son will return. . . . Let me be, let it be as if I wasn't ever here. Simply cremate me as John Doe.

The rest of the letter is addressed to "Mom and Dad":

> It is best if I cease to live, quietly, than risk that later I will break and shatter by violence or linger years under care.
>
> I implore you to see a psychiatrist in order that you might understand my death and my life. Ask thoroughly about what I was and you will see that it is not tragic that I am gone but more natural than if I continued. . .
>
> I was born with a definite pervasive melancholy. . . . What frustrated me most in the last year was that I had built no ties of family or friends. There was nothing of lasting worth and value. I led a detached existence and I was a parody of a person—literally and figuratively, I didn't tell jokes—I was a joke. I am a bomb of frustration and should never marry or have children. It is safest to defuse the bomb harmlessly now. I do not want to bother with being a 'reformed and cured' person limping through life. I am this self-centered. I am no longer interested in the world and know that it is not interested in me. When you stop growing you are dead. I stopped growing long ago. I never did develop into a real person and I cannot tolerate the false and empty existence I have created.
>
> Mom and Dad, you have provided me excellent advantages and privileges and experiences. I am extremely grateful for all of your sacrifices, time and support. I am now repaying you with an arrogant act. In this light, I do see it as criminal. I can only hope that you see that it was me who caused it.

After reading the article, the groups are directed to begin discussing and notetaking. Each group member takes notes on every member's responses. These are the guidelines they are given:

1. Record members' responses to this article.
2. Record members' experiences or stories they've heard about suicides.
3. Record members' opinions about what might have caused this particular suicide.
4. What do you say to someone who is thinking about suicide?

Each person is given this task:

"Pretend that this young man, 'John,' is still alive and is a friend of yours. You borrow a notebook from his locker without asking—as friends do. As you turn the pages, your eyes fall upon this very letter.

"Complete one of these tasks:

1. Write a letter to John about what you have found and what his plans are. Keep in mind your audience and purpose.
2. Write a letter to John's parents or a school counselor about John and his plans. Keep in mind the audience and purpose.
3. Write a letter to a mutual friend about what you found and what course of action you both should take. Keep in mind the audience and purpose.

As you write: Consider all the implications of what you are about to write. Use the notes from your discussion groups as a basis for the details of your letter. Each member will read the letters of other members and act as each other's editors."

The assignments continue in the same vein, working individually and in groups, reading newspaper accounts and essays, poetry, and fiction dealing with suicide from multiple perspectives. Students write to directed prompts and freewrite. The series concludes with the writing of a bio-poem about a suicide victim, an idea I adapted from an exercise done by Dave Roberts of Samford University. The directions for what to write for each line of the poem are given to the students:

Line 1: Suicide victim's name.
Line 2: List four traits to describe someone desperate enough to commit suicide.
Line 3: Sibling of:
Line 4: Lover of (3 emotions, things, attitudes, or situations).
Line 5: Who feels (3 emotions, things, attitudes, or situations).
Line 6: Who needs (3 emotions, things, attitudes, or situations).
Line 7: Who gives (3 emotions, things, attitudes, or situations).
Line 8: Who fears (3 emotions, things, attitudes, or situations).
Line 9: Who would like to see (3 emotions, things, attitudes, or situations).
Line 10: Who hates (3 emotions, things, attitudes, or situations).
Line 11: Resident of (Place).
Line 12: Victim's first name.
Lines 13–17: Free verse or rhyme, just be creative.

The Ethical Questions

So the point of therapy writing is not writing about suicide; the point is that writing teachers should offer the opportunity for students to cope—to write about their "people" problems, helping them learn about the causes of their problems, offering methods of healthy confrontation, perhaps helping them discover answers, and promoting good writing above all.

Before beginning therapy writing, teachers may find it necessary to consider some personal and ethical questions.

Question #1: Is the teacher acting as a therapist?

By no means am I advocating that the writing teacher proclaim "the therapist is in." Murray cautions against teachers assuming that responsibility, advising that "you are a writing teacher, and you must maintain an appropriate distance from the student so that you can serve as a teacher of writing" (p. 217). An essay by Shirley Rau recounts the answer a colleague gave to the question of a teacher's responsibility when a student turns in writing that is confessional, or that reflects a troubled perspective: "treat the piece as a work of art and comment on it as such. We are not trained to deal with counseling matters." ("A Work of Art," *Active Voices IV*, ed. James Moffett, Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1986, pp. 303-304). Most of us are not therapists, but such instances cannot be ignored if the teacher cares about the student/person. With therapy writing, we must be prepared for openness in writing since students often produce honest, authentic writing, the kind that often forces teachers to the edge of becoming "shadetree" therapists. However, teachers must guard against assuming that role.

Question #2: Am I prying into students' personal affairs by asking them to write about their problems?

First of all, do not pry, and let students know that you are not attempting to do so. Give options when using therapy writing so if students perceive an assignment as threatening their privacy, then there is an alternative of other assignments. Therapy is generated by the student and it is his or her choice to take advantage. Interestingly, I have found with my own students, as Murray does, "that although I provide that escape

route, few take it" (p. 218). It is also helpful to keep in mind that every student need not be directly experiencing the particular problem addressed by the writing assignment to see the relevance of the topic to family or friends or society in general. Thus, there is no prying into the lives of the troubled students, and there is the opportunity for the healthy student to receive therapy by at least developing some perspective or awareness of a relevant problem.

Question #3: If a student becomes involved in what the assignment addresses, committing or attempting suicide, for example, would the writing teacher be responsible?

I must admit that this is the most difficult question for me to answer with any satisfaction. Shirley Rau's experience with one of her students who attempted suicide, after dropping some subtle pleas for help through that semester's writings, was that the student "lived through the attempt but I died it a thousand times" (pp. 303-304). The year before I began using therapy writing, a student in my creative writing class committed suicide. I still struggle, wondering whether therapy writing would have made a difference. Looking back, I feel some guilt because I had not used assignments as therapy in that class. Had I used them and had that young man still carried out his suicide, I think neither I, as a writing teacher, nor the assignments would have been responsible, though I would still have felt some sense of guilt and failure. But to answer the question, the whole point of therapy writing is to offer students a foothold, or better, help prevent them from reaching a point of despair. Writing can be their release or their signal for help. Factors outside the classroom and beyond our control should take the blame and responsibility for any negative consequences that may coincide with the therapy writing assignment. I should also note that students are not just given a topic and left to go it alone. There is much discussion, interaction, and sharing within large and small groups as well as through private thinking about the topic. I have also found it useful to inform parents of this series of assignments and to ask for their help in dealing with such an approach, offering them the choice of nonparticipation for their children through alternative assignments and the opportunity to study and discuss the topics with me prior to their use in class.

Question #4: What if it is revealed through a student's writing that the student is obviously in real trouble or danger?

Donald Murray suggests a common sense approach of simply encouraging the student to get qualified help. Trust is important in therapy writing. If students know that they are dealing with an honest and trusting person, they are more likely to follow advice and encouragement to seek professional help. This emphasizes the importance of building a community of writers in the classroom, a community of people who care not only about each other's writing but about each other. I would never attempt to present these assignments early in the year, instead I wait until after a relationship of trust and respect has been established, and that, too, can be done through writing. If a student indicates problems, then of course the teacher cannot neglect this and should report any suspicions.

What matters most to writing teachers is good writing, and the value of therapy writing as a means of improving composition skills can be appreciated, once writing teachers are satisfied with the answers to these questions. Improvement of writing is the ultimate goal of therapy writing. Because therapy writing becomes personally relevant in most cases, I have found that students often become absorbed in the assignments. Most of my students are prolific in their writing if it happens to be a topic they understand well and are interested in. And since they have so much to say, some very interesting things happen throughout their writing process.

James Moffett points out that "good therapy and composition aim at clear thinking, effective relating, and satisfying self-expression" (*Coming on Center,* Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1981, p. 145). Any writing task that requires and produces clear thinking, effective relating, and satisfying self-expression is likely to succeed. As writing teachers, not therapists, we aim for good writing; help or attention is what we like to give en route. The therapy that is embedded in the assignments is available to students at their own choosing; it is up to them whether they want, need, accept, or reject it.

Therapy writing lessons require structure (specific goals, procedures, and guidelines) in order to avoid the kind of ambiguous direction (or lack of) that traditional essay assignments involve. From previous experience I know that students' writing has a tendency to be sterile, lacking any relevance except to fulfill what is considered the purpose of essay writing: to make certain they are able to write an essay for the next year's English teacher. With the right guidance, however, young writers can be given a chance to explore themselves, their worlds, and in turn develop their own writer's voice. Therapy writing produces more than text that students hope will please Teacher.

Moffett says, "The way a teacher sets up the assignment will influence crucially the focus, level, and selectivity of the student's inner speech, . . . thinking that produces authentic authoring" (p. 145). A characteristic of therapy writing is authentic student authoring. Another requisite of effective therapy writing assignments is that they should be extended, branching off from the main focus through several assignments. By extending assignments, students are given various tasks with different degrees of difficulty as well as different types of writing. The assignment becomes a means of thorough exploration—about problems, causes and solutions, as well as the writing process. Because the assignment usually deals with people writing about themselves or other people, there should be peer-group discussions as well as classroom discussions. Moffett substantiates this by noting that when students write original pieces—not interpretations—there should be "task talk, improvisation, and topic discussion" (p. 143), and certainly the class discussions and peer-group discussions that ensue are beneficial, not only in generating ideas but also in promoting interpersonal skills.

Students are people first and writers second. Why not capitalize upon the needs and experiences of our writers to help produce the desired effects of the writing process? At the same time we can give practical benefit to our writers by allowing some to release emotions or to face problems through their writing and to allow others to familiarize themselves with relevant human conflicts. The writer as well as the product may be improved through therapy-writing assignments.

Depending on the particular problem addressed, therapy writing in the classroom can be controversial and, to some, risky. Understandably, not all teachers are willing to accept such responsibility since many legal and ethical questions do remain unanswered. Personally, I believe that we as individuals must resolve some of these on our own with regard to our students, our teaching situations, and our own convictions. At any rate, we should not overlook the value of improving student writing through such an approach.

METAPHORS FROM THE ARTS: RETHINKING CONTEXTS FOR WRITING

by Rob Perrin
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One of the best things to happen to me as a writer—and especially as a teacher of writing—was that I came to writing by way of other arts. Don't get me wrong. I wrote all the time in classes—English, history, science, government, health—but the emphasis on "correct" patterns was compulsive, the topics we were handed were restrictive, the teaching methods were prescriptive, the attention to mechanics was obsessive, and the evaluation we received was destructive. Of the "-ives" that *didn't* apply to my experiences as a writer learning to write were supportive, creative, constructive, and positive.

I was lucky, however, in a way that many students are not—I had some talent as an artist, and I learned some lessons about learning from people who did not have the captive audiences of required classes. I took art classes; I took music classes; I took drama classes. And I learned that the best teachers to learn from are those who see themselves as craftspeople—as doers and as mentors—who can best teach by doing, showing, guiding, reinforcing, redoing, reshowing, reguiding, and reinforcing once more—all in a fluid sequence that does not depend on technical correctness or the implicit—and sometimes explicit—message that if we do not take everything seriously and "do it right," we will never survive in college or succeed in our professional lives.

Of course, I did not realize all this as a young student, although I must have sensed it. And it did occur to me later when I switched college majors—for the third time—to English teaching. I could not wrestle past the feeling that I did not want to teach writing as my own teachers had, even though my English methods class played that same melody with only slight variations. So I reflected on what the differences were between my instruction in artistic classes and in English classes and discovered a difference in the conception of the principles of both teaching and learning and discovered several teaching metaphors—so central to the other disciplines—that can illuminate our teaching of writing.

Apprenticeship

Art as a discipline provides one set of useful teaching and learning metaphors. As an art student, I was trained by a centuries-old pattern: the apprenticeship. As a teaching metaphor, the apprenticeship is compelling for a variety of reasons. My art teachers, the craftspeople to whom I was apprenticed five hours a week, treated me and my fellow students as developing artists, as people with innate skills that needed to be developed. Central to this conception was our teachers' sense of themselves as experienced artists (as well as teachers of art) who could help us develop and refine our skills by *showing* us how to be artists—not merely telling us about art, making project assignments, and then evaluating what we did. These teachers and their student-apprentices like me shared in the manipulation of the artistic media—painting, sculpting, drawing—and we learned about art by sharing experiences and techniques.

I vividly remember trying to throw a pot (art jargon for make, not hurl) during a session on pottery making; I had great difficulty at first, but Mr. Hill, sensing my frustration, guided my hands, helping me develop a touch that was neither too firm nor too relaxed. His engagement in the process—his willingness to "get his hands dirty" with me—remains fixed in my consciousness. It is so distinct from my memories of my writing teachers, standing apart, remaining aloof, and never allowing themselves to become—in my eyes or in my experiences—practitioners of a craft. Perhaps they felt it would violate my need to develop my own skills, perhaps they felt it was an inappropriate thing for an English teacher to do, and perhaps, unfortunately, they were not themselves skilled enough to show me how to write based on their own experiences.

The Sketchbook and The Portfolio

Another element of the art apprenticeship can be well used as a metaphor for the teaching of writing: the sketchbook. As part of our routine work in studio classes, we were required to keep a sketchbook, a collection of "small attempts" to exploit the world around us for subjects for our other, more substantive work. These sketches, as a result, were spontaneous renderings of people, places, and things that we noticed in the course of our daily lives. We were not expected to produce refined work, nor were we pressured to produce any one kind of work. Rather, we were expected to explore the world around us in an informal way and perhaps, as a result, discover an image to be further developed.

As part of the teaching of writing, the journal provides a parallel opportunity, if teachers will only free their students to use journals as opportunities for spontaneous and unpressured exploration, and not as another delimited, rule-bound "assignment." Too often, I fear, journals are used as one-dimensional homework assignments, with students composing fixed amounts of sometimes vacuous prose—a stated quantity of pages a week—to be counted and tallied in the gradebook. Yet if students can come to realize that journal entries—like sketchbook images—provide the early renderings of writing to be developed more fully later, they will be able to see the applied value of such work.

The concept of the portfolio also comes from art, a self-selected set of materials to illustrate the range of an artist's work. The portfolio often includes work in a variety of media, showing the versatility of the artist while at the same time illustrating his or her special strengths. I remember well sifting through my work—a large and somewhat random collection of prints, graphic designs, watercolors, sketches, and oil paintings—and making harsh critical judgments about what to include, knowing that I had to present in one small collection a broad profile of myself as an artist. The selection process brought into play a whole range of critical responses that I had not been forced to employ before, and the benefits of the selection process were numerous.

In writing classes, we could achieve a level of synthesis by asking our students to select from their body of work a representative sampling of their writing. The process of deciding what kinds of writing qualities to illustrate, of selecting samples to demonstrate those qualities, and of arranging the samples in an effective way can help our student-writers step outside themselves and examine their work as evaluator-critics.

Rehearsal and Recital

From music can come several additional metaphors. The central metaphor, the one that can enhance the teaching of writing most, I believe, is that of the rehearsal. My music teachers did not expect me to learn a full range of technical language to describe music, nor did they expect me to learn how to play notes in isolation. Rather, they assumed that the way to learn music was to play music. We played scales, we perfected tonal quality, and we practiced varied forms, but we did so with future performance in mind. We, in a sense, worked on parts, but we did so to create a whole.

In composition teaching, in contrast, we often work on parts without looking forward to producing a whole. Isolated exercises, without this projection into a future where the skills will be applied, leave students wondering whether we look at language skills and writing as separate activities—and we often suspend the applied work in writing that will, in fact, give meaning to the technical practice.

Another metaphor from music that can be transposed for the composition classroom is the recital. As almost everyone knows, a recital is a public performance by a group of individuals (with varying skills and skill levels), designed primarily to give budding performers public recognition and encouragement. As a concept, this can be well applied to writing, but the means of presentation must differ. A publication that includes a wide range of student work (again of varying skills and skill levels) is quite different from a student literary publication that is exclusive by nature. So rather than reserving student publications for students whose successes are most notable, we need to expand their contents to include the work of our developing writers. The audiences of such publications would acknowledge—as audiences of musical recitals do—the continuing efforts of those in early stages of development, and they will see, by comparison, just how good the best of our student writers can be.

The Curtain Rises

From drama we can derive yet another artistic metaphor: the sequentially developed production. Anyone who has worked on a play, or who has had a student who has, will know that good final performances (like good writing, actually) do not develop quickly or easily. Rather, they are the result of a carefully sequenced period of planning and rehearsing. The teacher-director, in this instance, provides a useful model for the instruction of writing: these people are coordinators (making schedules and arranging preliminary activities), coaches (planning experiences that will produce the best performances and demonstrating skills when necessary), synthesizers (helping to bring together the diverse elements involved in the complex process), and critics (noting weaknesses and strengths, with the purpose of improving the subsequent performance).

I remember well the directors of productions I worked in; they were active, enthusiastic, energetic, demanding, and critical. How often I remember them shouting (in bold voices that projected to the far corners of the theater), "Your movement is too random," "I cannot hear you," "That was better," "Be more aggressive," "Slow down that speech," "Hold that position longer," and other comments and suggestions that were intended to improve the performance for its ultimate audience. And yet they did not expect a good performance without providing ongoing guidance and repeated practice. Instead, we worked in stages—refining strengths and reworking troublesome elements until we produced the most polished production we could manage. The final feature of a production for a real audience provided an exigency that was crucial to pressure us to do our best work.

In writing class we, too, can direct our students' work with final, public presentations as a goal. Something as simple to compile as a photocopied collection of the best writing from a class can provide the larger context for students' work, as can displays of student writing in areas of our schools—where display cases often go unused or are more often monopolized by athletic departments. By expanding the audiences for our students' writing and by providing ongoing guidance as students refine their work for public presentation, we can create a more interactive context for writing than is often developed in "closed" classes where teachers remain the only audience for students' work.

With the rigidity that some teachers present writing, it is no wonder that many students feel disengaged and unmotivated. Emphasis on finished products and technical matters without corresponding, sequential, developmental stages of integrated work intimidate all but the most uniquely talented and the most intuitively skilled. As in the other arts, writing can be enhanced by a cluster of teaching and learning metaphors—the apprenticeship, the sketchbook, the portfolio, and the technical, sequential rehearsal leading to a performance or exhibit.

Reconceiving how we think about writing and the teaching of writing, acknowledging that writing is not merely a series of discreet stages leading to a formulaically generated final product for teachers' eyes only, we can enrich our work with students. By exploring and incorporating these and other metaphors from the arts, we can create a supportive, creative, constructive, and positive context for teaching writing.

NEW BEGINNINGS FOR CHANGE

by Susan Benjamin and Jane Gard
Highland Park High School, Illinois

Educational leaders at every level—national, state, and local—have responded to the need for change in various ways: by implementing new and expanded testing programs, creating strategic planning teams, restructuring curriculum for the 21st century, and developing partnerships with parents and the business community. But the starting point for school improvement can be simply a matter of attitude or point of view. This year at Highland Park High School, a century-old, tradition-rich school, we began the year by challenging the ways we did things previously. That attitude alone was responsible for helping meaningful change to occur.

Ninth-Grade Orientation

As we looked to the new school year, we wanted to find a way to orient and welcome the ninth graders and other students who were new to the school. Two members of the administrative team, the English Department Chairperson and the Athletic Director, were asked to create a ninth-grade orientation program. After determining the purpose of the program—a combination of information, entertainment, and tone-setting—we decided to focus on lessening the new students' anxiety, making ninth graders feel truly welcome and important, perhaps providing a chuckle or two as well. Because we value student participation, we involved student leaders in organizing and presenting the ninth-grade orientation program. When students and faculty members work in a true collaboration, the process can be mutually educational and the product can be inspired. As the collaboration progressed, the students and faculty members created a process that involved both generations in a school assembly, featuring representatives of many groups, such as our marching band and our school pride squad. Faculty volunteered to perform an original welcoming song, "You Gotta Have Pride," and upper-division students welcomed the ninth graders in an original skit, "The Freshman Shuffle."

The process of creating the ninth-grade orientation was important: faculty members and students, working together as colleagues, created and owned the process and product. After the assembly, the feedback we received from ninth graders mentioned the feeling of being honored by the program and feeling that Highland Park High School was a comfortable place to be. This

year, parents of ninth graders commented upon their children's exceptionally smooth transition to high school. The collaborative efforts of faculty and student leaders resulted in the desired effect: making students feel at home in our school.

New-Faculty Orientation

In making our change for new beginnings, we challenged the assumption that the mores of the school and its culture would become apparent to new faculty members immediately and automatically. This year, we deliberately created a program to present aspects of the Highland Park High School culture before school officially began. Similar to the planning and development of the new-student orientation program, the Social Studies and Science Department Chairpersons developed a program to orient teachers new to the school. After some discussion, they decided that, although much of their charge involved information-giving and procedures, providing enjoyment and fun was also important. Therefore, they planned a personal scavenger hunt, a humorous ice-breaking exercise with which to begin the program. They also decided to use role-playing of various situations to help bring procedures to life, instead of dry, didactic instruction.

In order to understand the school, one needs an understanding and appreciation of the culture of the community. At the new-faculty orientation program, a bus tour introduced the new teachers to our community with stops at "important" sites of our city: notably places where one can get a fast-food dinner, homes of well-known athletes, and the locations of feeder schools where our students come from. We even stopped for lunch at a neighborhood nature center. Seeing different neighborhoods, residences, religious institutions, parks, and "hangouts" helped to provide new teachers a context of their school community. Providing visual images of neighborhoods and student gathering spots helped our new teachers understand an important aspect of their students' lives.

Recognizing Continued Leadership

Our faculty is composed of strong, diverse, committed leaders. In setting the "new beginnings" tone for the opening of the school year, we wanted to recognize faculty contributions. Therefore, the opening faculty meeting was divided into segments that emphasized continued efforts previous to the start of the school year and the various leadership commitments that faculty members had undertaken for the new school year. Although the principal led the meeting, the principal did not own the meeting. Significantly, each person who was in charge of a direction was called on to speak about that initiative. Additionally, the leaders who presented at the meeting were not just the formally appointed leaders of the school; they were the informal leaders, such as the teacher who was the captain of the faculty baseball team.

With our collaborative model of students and teachers working together, we have experienced a number of successes in the year of new beginnings. For example, we have a new model for student cheerleaders. A group of boys asked if they could become cheerleaders, and we allowed them to do so. Our cheerleaders truly lead the cheers for the entire school. We also had an original musical play, "Student Stunts," written, performed, and directed entirely by students. The play was a huge success, due to a sparkling script and equally sparkling, animated performances. Additionally, our entire school was actively involved in a canned food drive for the needy. Mountains of cans, donated by varied constituents of our school community, were stacked in our counseling office. Finally, in our halls, our students and staff exude a spirit of camaraderie and a high sense of energy and purpose.

Despite gloomy reports about American education today and for the future, and despite problems that we face, we feel that by concentrating on our human resources and by establishing a truly collaborative atmosphere, we can direct change and improve education for our students. We look to the coming years with optimism and confidence. We look to new beginnings for change.

WHEN THE STUDENTS CREATE THE QUESTIONS

by Joy Marks Gray
Gilmour Academy, Gates Mills, Ohio

I have taught Advanced Placement English to seniors for ten years, and my students take the English Language and Composition Examination each May. We read, study, and discuss rhetoric and style, with reading selections ranging from advertising to the words of philosophers such as Plato and Sartre, from Anna Quindlen and George Will to literary selections as diverse as *Johnny Got His Gun, Being There, Heart of Darkness,* and *Slaughterhouse-Five.* We look at the selections with an eye to the power of words, regardless of whether it is literature, journalism, philosophy, or propaganda. Throughout the year, we discuss and write, discuss, write, discuss and write some more.

Traditionally, I have given the class a selection of six or seven essay questions for each trimester's 90-minute final exam, and asked them to write an in-class composition addressing one of them. Because my students are so accustomed to writing in-class compositions within a 43-minute class period, the students, already confident of their abilities, can relax somewhat when given the luxury of 90 minutes and write rather polished essays.

While it is true that each class develops its own personality, this year I was blessed with an Advanced Placement class that thrived on discussion—often penetrating and argumentative discussion—and whose members tended toward writing personal, reflective, and creative narratives, even when assigned rather straightforward literary analyses.

Because this group was so full of insight and creative energy, I found myself uncomfortable with my traditional structure for their final examination. I knew how deep their grasp of the individual pieces of literature had been, but I wanted to see what connections they had made throughout the trimester and what had struck them as personally significant. I wanted to include literature while giving them more ownership of the exam's structure than if I merely assigned a selection of choices. I then came up with an exam format that excited me because of its true scope of testing their critical thinking and writing skills.

One week prior to the exam I gave them a list of the literature we had read and discussed during the trimester as a reminder of what the exam would focus on; I included their research paper topics since they had invested so much of themselves into those works of individual analysis. I informed the class that the examination would be the usual in-class composition, but with a twist. When one student asked if I would give them a selection of questions, I responded, "Yes and no."

Intrigued, another asked, how many choices would I give; I answered, "One or an infinite number." When a third student asked if all choices would be literary or would some be creative, my response was, "yes." When asked the predictable question, "Will the exam be hard?", I replied, "I think it will be fun." Although their curiosity level was fairly high by the time of the exam, I hasten to point out that their anxiety was not; we were far

enough into the school year that levels of trust were fully established, and mutual expectations were clearly understood.

The Final Exam

When the students arrived the day of their exam, they received the following list of literary works:

Much Ado about Nothing
Heart of Darkness
The Natural
"The Allegory of the Den"
"The Bet"
"By the Waters of Babylon"
"The Bear"
"In the Penal Colony"
"Young Man Axelbrod"
"The Chrysanthemums"
"The Leader of the People"
"Marrakesh"
and the topic of your own research paper

The list was followed by these instructions:

You are devising an essay exam for an Advanced Placement English class. You want to assess the students' abilities to think critically, to analyze and synthesize, to draw together past and present learning, and to be creative.

1. Create an essay prompt utilizing at least three of the works of literature found in the list of works given that will fit the above stated criteria for assessment of ability.
2. Write an in-class essay that is a response to the prompt you create. Make sure you use specific examples in your essay as support.

After expressing initial looks of shock and muttering a few statements about how impossible this was, they began to work. And work they did. Their prompts exceeded my wildest expectations, and their essays were spectacular, written on works that they, not I, had chosen to respond to and seen connections between.

The following is a list of their prompts as they wrote them that day, unrevised and unedited:

1. Show how the main characters in "By the Waters of Babylon," "By the Chrysanthemums," and "The Bet" undergo a maturation and explain how their maturations are similar.
2. Although society is said to strengthen its members by drawing them together and educating them with each other's knowledge, by dividing labor so that each task of society is aptly taken care of, and through the creation of a support system whereby man helps man, many times society ultimately weakens its members while becoming strong itself. Discuss this idea, agreeing or disagreeing with it, as you examine at least three of the aforementioned pieces of literature (works used in the answer were "Allegory of the Den," "Marrakesh," *A Passage to India*, "The Bet," "Young Man Axelbrod," "By the Waters of Babylon").
3. Discuss, utilizing at least three works studied this trimester, the burdening role of the main character's past (works used in the answer were *The Natural*, "In the Penal Colony," and "Leader of the People").
4. The role of the natural world can create mood and set the theme for a short story or novel. Nature can also symbolize many different aspects of human nature. Please keep this in mind as you discuss the role of the natural world in *Heart of Darkness, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, and "The Bear."
5. The three works of literature—"The Bet," "The Chrysanthemums," and *Invisible Man*—all give a look into human relations. Each work reflects man's inability to see others as individuals. Agree or disagree.
6. Using examples from "The Chrysanthemums," "Young Man Axelbrod," and "The Bet," give proof to the cliche, "Ignorance is bliss."
7. Growth is a lifelong process. As one gets older, one grows and develops one's own personality. Many of these new aspects of personality are influenced by experiences one has at a later stage in life. Agree or disagree with this statement. Prove your answer using examples from *Heart of Darkness*, "Young Man Axelbrod," and *The Natural*.
8. Society often imposes its own standards and restrictions on an individual because of his/her age or sex. In "The Chrysanthemums," "Young Man Axelbrod," and from the works of Virginia Woolf, Elisa, Knute, and Woolf all make an attempt to go beyond these boundaries. Analyze their attempts and tell of their accomplishments and/or disappointments.
9. Many times in literature the main character is alone. From your reading in the past, what kind of loneliness have you found within the main characters, and what, if any, resolutions did they come to? (works used in the answer were "Young Man Axelbrod," *Cry, the Beloved Country*, and "The Chrysanthemums").
10. In the short stories "Young Man Axelbrod," "The Chrysanthemums," and "The Bet," what do Axelbrod, Elisa, and the young lawyer discover about their fellow man?
11. Without goodness there would be no evil, and without darkness there would be no light; contradiction is a measure of manifesting opposite extremes as well as a means of creating an area between, which fluctuates. Please identify and analyze darkness and evil and then tell the results of their synthesis to light and/or survival in the following works: "The Allegory of the Den," "By the Waters of Babylon," and *The Sound and the Fury*.
12. Using the works "The Bet," "Young Man Axelbrod," and "By the Waters of Babylon," write an essay which relates some of the characters' experiences of discovery with one of your own.
13. Show what effect following one's dreams to achieve one's goals had on Knute Axelbrod in "Young Man Axelbrod," the priest's son in "By the Waters of Babylon," and the grandfather in "Leader of the People."
14. How did *Much Ado about Nothing*, "By the Waters of Babylon," and "The Allegory of the Den" use deceptions in order to facilitate their stories?
15. How do three of the above mentioned pieces of literature utilize the action of the story to give definition and meaning to the central character? (works used in the answer were "The Chrysanthemums," "The Bet," and poetry by Langston Hughes).
16. In *Heart of Darkness*, "By the Waters of Babylon," and *The Grapes of Wrath*, each of the main characters must embark upon a journey into the unknown. Along these journeys, what are the lessons learned by Marlow, the young man, and Tom Joad, and how are they similar?

Nine of the seventeen students chose to use their research paper topics, and no two prompts were identical. None of the students took the easy way out by creating simple comparison/contrast

essays on the obvious, and all students went far beyond our class discussions in both prompt creations and written responses. After the exam, a few students sought me out to report that the exam had, indeed, been fun. Almost all of them used the full 90 minutes, and one student even complained that he felt pressed for time. Next year, I am contemplating using this exam format as a take-home exam. Whether I leave it as a timed examination or move it to a take-home exam, I am elated by the learning through testing exhibited by this format, and I certainly plan to use this ask-it-yourself exam again. After all, isn't the ultimate goal of teaching to prepare students to have not only the skills but also the confidence to do it themselves?

Book Review

Thomas J. Sergiovanni, *Value-Added Leadership: How to Get Extraordinary Performance in Schools,* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990.

by Alyce Hunter
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English/language arts leaders, like other educators in the 1990s, are being challenged by community members and other critics who question the effectiveness of today's schools in preparing students for the present and the future. Thomas J. Sergiovanni's *Value-Added Leadership: How to Get Extraordinary Performance in Schools,* addresses the twin problems of the appropriate reaction to criticism and the subsequent action for reform and change. Not a "how to" step-by-step guide to improving schools through values clarification and adoption, *Value-Added Leadership* is, rather, a concise volume analyzing and synthesizing insights from industry, Sergiovanni's own studies, and other research to provide a framework for educational reform. Four sequential leadership stages are identified based on Burns' transactional versus transformational distinction. Sergiovanni contends that these stages—bartering, building, bonding, and banking—can be used by effective leaders simultaneously for different purposes or with different people within each stage. Thus, effective leaders provide the means and opportunities for others to perform and achieve. Furthermore, trust and respect are considered essential and vital in creating an educational environment where all are "enabled, empowered, and enhanced."

It is somewhat interesting that Sergiovanni chose, consciously or subconsciously, to present his beliefs and findings as a mission statement using rhetoric, imagery, and symbolism that is essentially religious, and particularly Judeo-Christian, in connotation. For example, just as in the Old Testament God proposed a covenant to Moses, so Sergiovanni's scheme contains a covenant or vision shared by leaders, staff, and students. "A binding and solemn agreement needs to emerge that presents a value system for living together and that provides the basis for decisions and actions" (p. 57). Also, just as in the Bible, the terms of God's contract with man were formalized into ten value-added commandments, so Sergiovanni formalizes his contract into nine dimensions and two corollaries. These dimensions and corollaries, like the commandments, contain simple yet powerful ideas. "The emphasis is on leadership, extraordinary performance investment, providing symbols and enhancing meaning, purposing, enabling teachers and the school, building an accountability system, intrinsic motivation, collegiality, and leadership by outrage" (as detailed on chart, p.15). Additionally, just as the Judeo-Christian tradition is rich in ceremonies and devotions, so Sergiovanni stresses the necessity for rites and celebrations to ensure continuity of beliefs and actions and ". . . to celebrate the sacred ritual of teaching" (p.89). Furthermore, the Christian paradox—it is in giving that one receives—is echoed in Sergiovanni's acceptance of the outcome of Tannenbaum's research. "He found that leaders can actually increase control by giving up authority. . . . Shared power means more power for everyone" (p. 106).

Yet no one can accuse Sergiovanni of jingoistic prophesizing or emotional haranguing. Rather, he bases his ideas and statements on research, facts, and figures gleaned from education and business. He applies business-based concepts to public school settings because he believes these findings are relevant to human nature, in general, and to education, in particular. For example, the restructuring of corporations, like Exxon, involving decentralization and self-management, is paralleled with his belief that education should become site-based and self-determining, with a central administrative office functioning not as a control center but as a service provider (p. 99). The acceptance of workers as individuals by Japanese industries is praised and contrasted to the viewpoint of many American businesses that see the ideal workers as conformists. Furthermore, Sergiovanni contends that public schools, like industries, should seek a competitive advantage against each other and not between their own members. Marketing orientation and practices should also be adopted (p. 72).

However, one can question whether some statements are too generalized and grandiose, such as: "The lessons from business are important. If empowerment and enabling leadership are good enough for Goodyear, NUMI, Dana, Xerox, Ford, Harley-Davidson, American Express, IBM, and Exxon then they are especially good for Washington Elementary School, King Middle School, and Loyola High School" (p. 101). Such remarks seem to ignore that schools and industries have some basic differences. For instance, the goal of business is to produce a product or service that will make a profit; the goal of schooling *is* to produce a far more important product—an educated human being. Nevertheless, Sergiovanni does acknowledge that schools are somewhat unique: ". . . Building a professional culture of teaching is the only alternative available to us if we seek excellence in a world of schooling that is loosely connected managerially but tightly connected culturally. It is argued that the peculiar combination of looseness and tightness that characterizes schools means that nothing else will work" (p. 117). However, he does employ industrial models and axioms when he believes they are relevant to the leading, teaching, and learning situations.

In addition to providing examples from industry, *Value-Added Leadership: How to Get Extraordinary Performance in Schools* contains highly readable and personally applicable case studies and tips from educators. For example, the successful partnership between Saanich School District in British Columbia and AT&T Canada, local businesses, the Thompson newspaper chain, and Sony in Project Pulse is detailed because of its successful use of marketing techniques and strategies. Also, more mundanely, the daily file folder system used by Principal John Meyer is explained and extolled.

Thus, Sergiovanni's book is a practical yet philosophical guide that positively calls for school reform. English/language arts

leaders and all educators are urged to be flexible, resilient, and persistent as they unite with staff, parents, students, and community to pursue the goal of excellence through a shared covenant. Paradoxically, these participants are joined in a leadership-followership mission in which the leaders are followers and the followers are leaders.

Software Review

"Harper Reading Software," reading/writing software to accompany Kathleen McWhorter's study skills and reading texts.

by Wendy Paterson
Buffalo State College

What do an article on "Flirtation," an excerpt from a political science textbook, and a lesson on "Memory" all have in common? For one, they are samples of typical collegiate reading assignments, but in just about every other way, they seem to belong to different species. The challenge to a reading teacher at any level is to prepare students in developing some consistent yet flexible reading strategies, ones that will help them comprehend just about any type of text.

On the college level, Kathleen McWhorter is a recognized author of texts on college reading and study skills. Her books include *College Reading and Study Skills, More Efficient and Flexible Reading, Study and Thinking Skills in College.* In casual conversation at a New York College Learning Skills Association symposium, Dr. McWhorter and I discussed the use of writing-to-read strategies and the need to have computer assisted instruction that approximates the actual reading/writing task. Because reading, like writing, is a covert and synthetic process, it is important to emphasize process in order to improve skills.

Though some teachers and software companies would have you believe that reading can be reduced to a number of fill-in-the-blanks and exercises on "Finding the Main Idea," a preponderance of research emphatically denies that these kinds of "workbook" activities have any transferable effect to "real" reading. Thus, bad reading software is abundant and good reading software is hard to find. In an effort to "practice what I preach," I offered to author some reading software for McWhorter's books that would follow a more educationally valid model connecting reading and writing.

The format of "Harper Reading Software" is basically the same for all three of McWhorter's books for which it was written. The first section is prereading, including a guided prereading experience (using highlighting bars) and a chance to develop some predictions about the material from the prereading. The second section allows the student to read at a self-set or preselected rate followed by a comprehension section where students look at the reading both literally and inferentially. This section also accesses two levels of help; one allows the reader to return to the text to reread when necessary, and the second level gives a more direct hint concerning the comprehension question. The third section provides a simple word processor for work on responding, summarizing, taking notes, and working with vocabulary.

These activities are directly connected to the text, which appears in a view window at the bottom of the screen with guidance instructions. Students type in the upper half of the screen, and what they type can be printed and saved.

What is unique about this system is that it follows as closely as a computer can the actual cognitive processes of reading and comprehending. It also gives the student ample opportunity to write to learn. These are not exercises that are independent from the text; rather, they are intimately connected with it. The writing tasks expected most in college classes—summarizing, making connections, and formulating questions—are modeled and practiced on each reading. The vocabulary activity takes the reader from discovering the meaning from the context to the use of the word, if needed, in the student's own context.

Use of this software is related to the McWhorter books, but not dependent on them. High School English teachers who are interested in helping their students respond to text in writing are encouraged to investigate this software. The text of these selections may be too difficult to be handled independently by less sophisticated students, but the model for reading and writing might be helpful in constructing activities like these with other appropriate material.

I cannot claim to be unbiased in praising this software for its adherence to what I believe to be sound principles of teaching reading and writing, but I encourage writing to Harper Collins for a demonstration disk. I was given as much latitude as the programmer would allow me for constructing this material to encourage active participation in reading, unrestricted by the computer's desire for numbers to crunch. I hope those who invest in "Harper Reading Software" will find it a useful tool, one that may help to model techniques that can be applied to all text.

CALLS FOR MANUSCRIPTS— PLANS FOR FUTURE ISSUES

The *English Leadership Quarterly,* a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary/secondary/college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are always welcomed.

Software reviews and book reviews related to the themes of the upcoming issues are encouraged.

Recent surveys of our readers reveal these topics of interest: leadership training for the new department chair, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, the tracking/grouping controversy, problems of rural schools, the value of tenure, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

May 1993 (February 1 deadline):
Political Questions: Censorship, Gender, Standards, Certification, Proactive Lobbies, and Legislation

October 1993 (July 1 deadline):
The Other Side of the Desk: Teachers in Other Roles

December 1993 (May 15 deadline):
Case Studies of Chairs
guest editor: Henry Kiernan
Southern Regional High School District of Ocean County
Manahawkin, New Jersey 08050 (609-597-9481)

February 1994 (November 1 deadline):
Practical Advice, Strategies, and Suggestions

Manuscripts may be sent on 5.25- or 3.5-inch floppy disks, with IBM compatible ASCII files or as traditional double-spaced typed

copy. Address articles and inquiries to: James Strickland, Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly*, English Department, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, 16057-1326. (FAX 412-738-2098)

Announcements

SPECIAL GUEST-EDITED ISSUE: CASE STUDIES FOR ENGLISH LEADERS

by Henry G. Kiernan
Southern Regional High School District Manahawkin, New Jersey

MBA candidates and prospective attorneys are trained to enter their professions by studying a variety of classic cases. In education, we are rediscovering that case studies, offering a reflective analysis of decision-making experiences, provide a means for professional growth that can be insightful and lasting. As guest editor for the December 1993 issue, I am issuing a call for case studies reflecting on critical events in your English Department. These events or episodes may be typical, exemplary or problematic. In particular, I am looking for cases rich in contextual detail, anecdotes, and reconstructed dialogue about:

- —"success stories" in restructuring an English Department or school;
- —conditions necessary for developing teachers and supervisors as reflective practitioners;
- —situations that raise unresolved questions or issues;
- —leadership episodes that examine decision-making experiences for supervisors and teachers.

For each case selected, a panel of experienced English leaders will provide brief commentaries. In order to provide time to elicit the panel's responses, please submit manuscripts by May 15, 1993. Address case studies and inquiries to: Henry G. Kiernan, Supervisor of Humanities, Southern Regional High School District, 600 N. Main Street, Manahawkin, New Jersey 08050, PHONE 609-597-9481, FAX 609-978-0298.

ENGLISH AND READING GROUPS RECEIVE FEDERAL FUNDING TO DEVELOP STANDARDS

The U.S. Education Department today announced a three-year, $1.8-million project to develop national standards for English, to be carried out jointly by the Center for the Study of Reading, based at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; the International Reading Association, Newark, Delaware; and the National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois.

"We need national standards for English in order to guarantee *all* students access to the best possible education in language and literacy," said P. David Pearson, dean of the School of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "But to prevent standards from becoming narrow, parochial, and rigid, we need to make sure that the process for setting standards is open, democratic, and dynamic."

"At a time of much discussion about how well students read, the International Reading Association is pleased to be involved in this important effort to establish what American students should know and be able to do," said IRA President-elect Doris Roettger. "Financial support at the federal level sends a strong message to both the education community and the public. It says we want to provide the best possible reading and English instruction to America's students, and we are taking steps to do so."

"The National Council of Teachers of English," its president, James E. Davis of Ohio University said, "has decided to help develop standards because we believe that English teachers, in cooperation with the public, must outline the vision of teaching and learning in English language arts. We see this project as an opportunity to change the models guiding instruction in English."

The standards project for English will "articulate high expectations for classroom instruction and student learning," the cooperating organizations said, and will provide "visions and mileposts" of classroom instruction, kindergarten through grade 12, for educators, policymakers, parents, and other concerned citizens. It is designed to "help teachers establish an English curriculum based upon the best research and the most current knowledge about literature, composition, reading, and oral communication."

A 25-member English Standards Board, which will oversee the project, will include representatives from the English and reading professions and related sectors of the education community, policymakers, and representatives of business, industry, communications, and the general public. The project will have three co-directors: P. David Pearson, dean of the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Alan Farstrup, executive director of IRA; and Miles Myers, executive director of NCTE.

Drafting of the content of the standards document will be carried out by three six- to seven-member task forces focusing on the learning and teaching of English at different stages of education: early childhood (kindergarten through grade 4), middle school (grades 5 through 9), and high school (grades 9 through 12). The membership of each will represent different perspectives and curricular emphases within literature, writing, reading, and oral communication.

The co-directors, the chair of the English Standards Board, and the task force chairs will make up the management team. An advisory relationship will be established between the IRA Board of Directors, the NCTE Executive Committee, and the English Standards Board.

The project will be housed at the Center for the Study of Reading, with participating staff at the headquarters of IRA in Newark, Delaware, and of NCTE in Urbana, Illinois.

The final standards document for English will consist of an overarching framework, specific standards for teaching and learning, and a set of vignettes illustrating how the standards would be applied in classroom contexts.

The time-line for the standards project calls for task force members to be announced in the coming month and to begin in November–December to develop the framework, with a target completion date of May–June 1993. Drafting of the standards document and vignettes is scheduled to start in July 1993. The revised document is scheduled to go to the English Standards Board for approval in August 1994, with publication in late 1994 and dissemination continuing through July 1995.

The Center for the Study of Reading, established in 1976, is a multidisciplinary community of scholars and practitioners who conduct both basic and applied research to produce a better understanding of how people learn to read, how they comprehend what they read, and how they can be taught to read. Through its publications and conferences, the Center has disseminated the results of this research to a variety of audiences, affecting decision making, theory, and practice in reading instruction.

The International Reading Association was founded in 1956 as a professional organization of individuals and institutions concerned with the improvement of reading and the development of literacy. The primary purposes of the Association are to improve the quality of reading and instruction at all levels, to develop an awareness of the impact of reading among all people, and to promote the development among all peoples of a level of reading proficiency that is commensurate with each individual's unique capacity. The Association has 93,000 members worldwide.

NCTE is reviewing proposals for new volumes in its *Classroom Practices in the Teaching of English* series—a series that showcases effective teaching strategies and encourages teacher-writers to share their expertise. If you would like to edit a *Classroom Practices* volume, please contact us. Proposals should 1) describe the theme that will provide the focus of the volume, and discuss why it is of substantial interest to teachers of English and language arts; 2) identify the target audience (e.g., elementary teachers, middle school, etc.); 3) offer a general plan for the thematic structure of the volume (e.g., a tentative table of contents); 4) give evidence of interested contributors or outline a plan for securing individual chapters. For more information and for prospectus guidelines, please write to the Senior Editor for Publications, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana IL 61801-1096.

CEL ELECTION RESULTS

Winners of the CEL election were announced at the 1992 CEL Conference in Louisville. Louann Reid, Douglas County High School, Castle Rock, Colorado, and Rick Chambers, Grand River Collegiate Institute, Kitchener, Ontario, were elected Members-at-Large. Donald L. Stephan, Sidney High School, Sidney, Ohio, was elected Associate Chair. The CEL Bylaw Amendment to Article X, which gives the CEL Executive Committee the authority to determine the annual dues structure, was passed.

CEL Executive Committee

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